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OR, THE

HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE Saml. Miller.

History of *Deborah*, *Ruth*, and *Hannah*.

BEING A

COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED AT THE

SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

By HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

The First American Edition.

COMPLETE IN *SIX VOLUMES*.

VOL. V.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.———JOHN viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.———REVELATION i. 8.

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and againſt thee; pray unto the Lord that he take away the ſerpents from us: and Moſes prayed for the people. And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Make thee a fiery ſerpent, and ſet it upon a pole: and it ſhall come to paſs that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, ſhall live. And Moſes made a ſerpent of braſs, and put it upon a pole, and it came to paſs, that if a ſerpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the ſerpent of braſs, he lived.

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Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

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SACRED

SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

LECTURE I.

REVELATIONS XX. 11, 12, 13.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

IT is a solemn thing for a man to be judged of his own conscience. How sweet is the approving testimony of that bosom monitor and witness! but more bitter than death its upbraiding and reproaches. To stand at a human tribunal, with life or reputation, death or infamy depending on the issue, can never appear a light matter to one who understands and feels the value of either. Even conscious innocence and integrity, accompanied with good hope toward

God, court not the eye of public inquiry, but prefer the ſecret, ſilent feaſt of inward peace, and of divine applauſe, to the public banquet of innocence proved and proclaimed by ſound of trumpet. Serious it is to reflect that your name, your words, your conduct may become matter of record, and ages to come mention them with approbation and eſteem, or with indignation and contempt. But every feeling of this ſort is loſt in the certain and more awful proſpect of judgment to come. It is a light thing to be judged of man, who can only kill the body, and blight the reputation, and beyond that hath nothing more that he can do; but how formidable is the judgment of Him, who knows the heart, who records in "the book of his remembrance" the actions of the life, the words that fall from the tongue, the thoughts which ariſe in the heart; who will bring every ſecret thing to light, and "render to every man according to his works;" and who, "after he has killed, has power to deſtroy body and ſoul in hell."

Aided by the light which ſacred hiſtory ſheds on ages and generations paſt, we have ventured into the ſolemn manſions of the dead, and converſed with thoſe ſilent inſtructors who know not either to flatter or to fear; and whom the Spirit of God has condeſcended to delineate in their true colours and juſt proportions, that they may ſerve to us "for doctrine, and for reproof, and for correction, and for inſtruction in righteouſneſs." We have plunged into ages beyond the flood, and contemplated human nature in its original glory; "man," as God made him, "perfect;" and man, as he made himſelf, loſt in the multitude of his own inventions.

The "firſt man, by whom came death,—the figure of Him who ſhould come, by whom is the reſurrection of the dead: Adam, in whom all die: Chriſt, in whom all ſhall be made alive."

We have attended "righteous Abel" to the altar of God, and beheld the ſmoak of his "more excellent ſacrifice"

ſacrifice" aſcending with acceptance to heaven: and "by which, he being dead, yet ſpeaketh."

We have ſeen the hands of "wicked Cain" beſmeared with a brother's blood; and the earth refuſing to cover that blood, but calling to Heaven for vengeance on the murderer; and the guilty wretch rendered a terror to himſelf.

We have ſeen theſe, one after another, dropping into the grave; and in that, the triumph of ſin and death. But in Enoch we behold the triumph of faith and holineſs, the triumph of almighty grace over ſin and death, and over him who has the power of death. Our eyes follow "the holy man who walked with God," not to the "dreary houſe appointed for all living," but, through the higher regions of the air, toward the bleſſed abodes of immortality, till a cloud receives him out of our ſight.

We ſought ſhelter with Noah, and his little ſaved remnant, from that deluge which deſtroyed a world of ungodly men, in the ark which God commanded; which that "preacher of righteouſneſs prepared for the ſaving of his houſe;" and which Providence conducted and preſerved amidſt the wild uproar of contending elements—and with him perceived the wrathful ſtorm ſpending its fury, and the dawning light of a day of mercy returning.

We have ſeen the renewed, reſtored world, again overſpread with violence, ignorance, impiety and idolatry: and the hope of the human race ready to be extinguiſhed in the perſon of a wandering, aged, childleſs man; that in the decay of exhauſted, expiring nature, the world might be made to ſee, and to acknowledge the vigour, the infallibility, the unchangeableneſs of God's covenant of promiſe. We removed with that illuſtrious exile from place to place, and with joy beheld his faith crowned at length with the promiſed ſeed, in whom all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed."

From that "tender plant," that "root out of a dry ground," we ſaw a ſucceſſion of fair and fruitful branches ariſe, while we ſtudied the noiſeleſs, ſequeſtered, contemplative life of Iſaac, and the active, variegated, chequered life of Jacob, his younger ſon.

In the affliction of Joſeph we felt ourſelves afflicted, in his exaltation we rejoiced, and by his virtues and piety, in every variety of human condition, we received at once inſtruction and reproof.

The ſweet hiſtorian, who had diſcloſed all theſe wonders of antiquity to our view, opened to us all theſe ſtores of knowledge, all theſe ſources of delight, comes forward himſelf at laſt upon the ſcene, and continues to miniſter to our pleaſure and improvement, by a faithful and affecting detail of his own eventful ſtory, and a candid diſplay of his own ſentiments, character and conduct. What heart ſo hard as not to melt at ſight of yonder weeping babe, a deſerted, expoſed, periſhing Hebrew child, floating down the ſtream! What heart does not glow to ſee him the pride and ornament of Pharaoh's imperial court, inſtructed in all the learning of the Egyptians! What boſom catches not the hallowed ardour of patriotic fire from the intrepid avenger of his country's wrongs! In whatever ſituation or character we view him, whitherſoever we follow his ſteps, we feel ourſelves attracted, delighted, inſtructed.

He furniſhes us with the hiſtory of his brother Aaron and his family, and of the eſtabliſhment of the Levitical prieſthood, a type of the everlaſting and unchangeable prieſthood of the Redeemer. We attended the venerable pair of brothers to the top of the mountain, and beheld Aaron ſtript of his pontifical robes, reſigning his charge, cloſing his eyes in death; and heard Moſes himſelf warned to prepare for his departure.

Not only by a diſplay of worth and excellence, but by a delineation of vice, by the exhibition of a "heart deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked;" has

has he conveyed to us the means of inſtruction and improvement; in preſenting us with the portrait of Balaam, who "loved the wages of unrighteouſneſs." In the character of that bad man, we behold the humiliating union of great talents and a corrupted heart; prophetic gifts and moral depravity; knowledge of the truth, and wilful adherence to error; admiration of virtue, and fixed habits of vice; an earneſt wiſh to "die the death of the righteous," with a deliberate determination to live the life of the wicked; and all this myſtery of iniquity explained in one ſhort ſentence; his heart went out after its covetouſneſs.

All theſe have paſſed in review before us; and their exiſtence, in ſucceſſion to one another, occupies a ſpace of two thouſand five hundred years. But the text collects them, and us, and all ſucceeding generations of men, into one great co-exiſtent aſſembly, to undergo a judgment infinitely more ſolemn than ever was pronounced from human tribunal; a judgment infallible, final, irreverſible; which ſhall bring to trial, and condemn all haſty, raſh, erroneous judgments of men, clear injured innocence, bring to light and reward hidden worth, abaſe inſolence and pride, detect and expoſe hypocriſy. Let the proſpect of it direct all our inquiries, animate all our exertions, dictate all our deciſions on the character and conduct of other men, and influence, form and govern our own. Thus the review of preceding perſonages and events, and the proſpect of thoſe to come ſhall be animated, improved, ſanctified; thus ſhall we feel our intereſt in, and connexion with the church of God univerſal, of every age, and converſe with Moſes and the prophets as our contemporaries, countrymen and friends, whom we ſhall ſhortly join, and be united to them in bonds of pure and everlaſting love. Recollecting times paſt, anticipating ages to come, let us draw near and conſider this great ſight, and may God grant us to feel and improve its influence.

The

The imagery of the ſcene is ſublime and ſtriking. "I ſaw a great white throne." "A throne," royal ſtate, eſtabliſhed empire, acknowledged ſway, the right and power of judgment united, univerſal, everlaſting, uncontrollable dominion. A "great" throne. The ſeat of kings is raiſed a little above the people; that of Solomon had ſix ſteps; ivory and gold lent their combined aid to enrich and adorn it. But what is the glory of Solomon? His throne, once the ſeat of wiſdom, to whoſe oracular voice foreign potentates and their nations liſtened with admiration and reſpect, was at length diſhonoured, degraded, defiled by the impurities of idolatry, and by the imprudence and apoſtacy of him who ſat upon it, and thus deprived of one of its firmeſt ſupporters, it ſhook under him, and he at length dropped from it, a monument of the nothingneſs and vanity of human grandeur, wealth and wiſdom. Ten of its twelve props ſlipt from beneath it, through the imprudence of his ſon; and, after a few convulſive ſtruggles, it ſunk at length into the duſt, a poor, precarious, ſubordinate throne, ſubject to the lordly ſtate of an Aſſyrian prince. What is the glory of angels that excel in ſtrength? Delegated power, derived ſplendour, imparted wiſdom, dignity under authority. But, behold on yonder radiant throne, one "made ſo much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." "He maketh his angels ſpirits, and his miniſters a flame of fire. But unto the Son he ſaith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a ſceptre of righteouſneſs is the ſceptre of thy kingdom." "Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footſtool." Behold "the Lord ſitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," ſurrounded with the ſeraphim, crying continually unto one another, and ſaying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hoſts, the whole earth is full of his goodneſs."

"—A great *white* throne," the emblem of purity, truth and righteouſneſs; itſelf unſullied, and purifying

ing all that approach it. "Righteouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his throne; mercy and truth go before his face." "Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?" With the pureſt intention, with the higheſt degree of human ſagacity, with the moſt extenſive knowledge of the law, and the moſt determined reſolution faithfully to apply it, earthly tribunals are not ſecure from error: craft may overreach wiſdom; hypocriſy may diſguiſe the truth, or cover falſehood; the ſtream of juſtice may be diverted or forced out of its channel, and the pellucid tide undergo a temporary pollution. The princes of this world muſt ſee with the eyes and hear with the ears of other men; the worthy and the wiſe may, of courſe, be kept at a diſtance, while demerit, wickedneſs and folly baſk in the ſunſhine of royal favour. But yonder radiant throne applies an infallible teſt to all that approach it: hypocriſy drops the maſk, the windings of deceit and cunning ſtand expoſed, the brazen, impoſing forehead of impudence is covered with a bluſh, and the ſtony, unfeeling, unrelenting heart is diſſolved into water—modeſt worth rears its drooping head, conſcious integrity expands its glowing boſom, and purity ſeeks the ſource from which it ſprang.

Obſerve the difference; mark the changes which theſe undergo, as they draw nigh; ſee the hardened ſinner, caſed in ſevenfold adamant, advancing with intrepid ſtep, ſtriving to make aſſurance paſs for innocence. But, lo, the rays of that white throne have fallen upon him; the ſpots begin to appear, they grow blacker and blacker, he gradually becomes abominable and more abominable; odious to the beholder, a terror to himſelf, he ſhrinks from inquiry, darkneſs is diffuſed around from the brightneſs of that light; he calls upon the mountains to fall upon him, and upon the hills to cover him.

Not ſo the humble follower of the Lamb. His countenance becomes more and more ſerene, his confidence increaſes, every blemiſh diſappears, "the glory

glory of the Lord is riſen upon him," his luſtre brightens as he proceeds, at length he is united to, he is loſt in the fountain of joy.

"—I *ſaw* him that ſat on it." "No man hath ſeen God at any time." Remove that cloud, that vapour, and I am unable ſtedfaſtly to behold the face of the ſun; how much more, the face of Him who arrays the ſun in all his effulgence! If he raiſe his voice a little louder in the whirlwind, or in the thunder, I am overwhelmed and loſt.

Ah! it is conſcious guilt that appals me, that clothes the face of God with terror, that roars in the tempeſt, that raiſes the voice of the mighty thunder: but, "reconciled unto God," "juſtified by faith," I "have peace with God," I ſee as I am ſeen, I know as I am known; "beholding with open face as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord," lo, the believer is gradually "changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "The only begotten who is in the boſom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Did the pomp and wiſdom of an earthly potentate dazzle and delight the eyes of a ſovereign like himſelf, and conſtrain one inured to ſcenes of magnificence, to cry out, "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land,—howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had ſeen it: and behold the half was not told me?" What then will it be to ſee, with the beloved diſciple, "a great white throne, and him who ſits upon it," with the myriads of the heavenly hoſt bending before it, rejoicing without trembling.

Grant me, gracious God, now to ſee thee in theſe thy lower works, in the wonders of thy providence, in the exceeding riches of thy grace, in the face of thy Son Chriſt Jeſus, and thereby prepare me for ſeeing thee as thou art, and for being made like unto thee! Place me with thy ſervant Moſes upon a rock, put me in a clift of the rock, cover me with thy hand while

while thou paſſeſt by, remove thy hand, that I may trace thy preſence in the bleſſings thou haſt left behind thee, that I may be ſtrengthened to meet the direct rays of thy countenance, when thou comeſt to "be glorified in thy ſaints, and admired in all them that believe." "From whoſe face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them."

"All theſe things ſhall be diſſolved. The heavens ſhall paſs away with great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat, the earth alſo, and the works that are therein ſhall be burnt up." "They ſhall periſh, but thou ſhalt endure: yea, all of them ſhall wax old like a garment; as a veſture ſhalt thou change them, and they ſhall be changed. But thou art the ſame." God "*ſpake*, and it was done; he gave commandment, and it ſtood faſt." "At his word earth and heaven roſe out of chaos," and lo, he *looks* them into nothing again; they ſhrink from his preſence, they vaniſh at his nod, they cannot abide the brightneſs of his coming. They have fulfilled their day, they have accompliſhed the purpoſe of him who made them, they have contributed their aid toward the rearing of a more glorious fabric, and having become unneceſſary, that moment diſappear.

The local and tranſient effects of an earthquake, a hurricane, an inundation, are ſtriking, impreſſive and permanent: proud cities levelled to the earth, or ſwallowed up of it; fertile plains overwhelmed with a briny or a fiery tide; the glory of man ſought, but not to be found. But what is this to the diſſolution of a globe? Surely the balance muſt be deſtroyed, a blank in nature take place, and wild uproar enſue. No, the viſion repreſents a whole ſyſtem paſſing away; that ſun and all the ſurrounding planets, and innumerable other "planets circling other ſuns," loſt, yet not miſſed; fled "as the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion," and not a wreck left behind; and yet no ſchiſm, no deficiency in the body; for the promiſe of the Eternal immediately

immediately repairs the loſs; he makes "all things new;" "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs."

With the heavens and the earth, the little, fading intereſts and diſtinctions of the world vaniſh alſo. Before his face all is reduced to one level, all is compoſed and tranquillized; every one reads his doom in the face of the ſovereign Judge. The heavens and earth have fled away, but the rational beings which peopled them remain; they are of a more enduring ſubſtance, they partake of the nature of God himſelf, they are immortal, eternal like him. "I ſaw," ſays John, "the dead *ſmall* and *great* ſtand before God."

When time was, theſe were diſtinctive characters. There was the infant of days, and the hoary head, the inhabitant of the palace, and of the cottage, the learned and the illiterate, the ſlave and his maſter. But theſe marks of difference are forever aboliſhed. Indeed they were long before aboliſhed. Before that great and notable day of the Lord came, before the judgment was ſet, or the books were opened, diſeaſe and death and the grave had levelled all the diſtinctions of this world; had reduced the ſceptred monarch to the condition of the peaſant, annulled the difference between the ſlave and his maſter. The deciſive hour is now come which is forever to determine who is henceforth to be accounted ſmall, and who great; the hour that ſhall bring to light hidden worth, and thruſt preſumptuous pride into outer darkneſs; that ſhall exalt the good to the throne of God, and plunge the wicked into the depths of hell.

The *dead* ſmall and great. Even the awful diſtinction between the dead and the living ſhall then be done away. They were dead, but are alive again; "for all live to him." Behold the mouldering earth, before it be forever diſſolved, reſtoring to exiſtence every particle of itſelf which once entered into the compoſition of a human being, which was once animated with the breath of life. Behold the ſpacious

ſea,

ſea, before it be forever dried up, ſurrendering its hidden treaſure, not the ſilver, and gold, and jewels which its vaſt womb contains, but the innumerable myriads of men and women it had been inſatiately devouring during ſo many ages, and whom it can no longer cover or conceal. The ſound of the laſt trumpet has diſpelled their long ſlumber. See, they emerge from their watery bed, they ſpring up into newneſs of life, their eyes again behold the light, the light of an eternal day, they ſwim through regions of tranſparent air, they can die no more, they haſten to appear before their Judge. Behold the grim king of terrors, faithful to his truſt, giving in the exact regiſter of his wide domain, reſigning his awful empire, reſtoring his captives to life and liberty, and their rightful Lord; not one loſt, not one detained: and the great deſtroyer is at length himſelf deſtroyed.

And for what purpoſe this mighty preparation, this ſecond birth of nature, this new creation of God? Behold an aſſembled world, from the father of the human race down to the youngeſt of his ſons, *ſtand* before God. They ſtand as ſubjects in the preſence of their Sovereign, as expectants before the eternal Arbiter of their deſtiny. In his eyes, in their own conſciences they read their doom; they ſtand to hear the irreverſible decree; their poſture ſpeaks acknowledgment of the right of judging, ſubmiſſion to authority, acquieſcence in the wiſdom and juſtice of the Judge. But that erect attitude muſt quickly change into the proſtration of dutiful and grateful children, or of foes ſubdued, of wretches condemned; for lo,

The books are opened, and judgment begins. It is ſpoken after the manner of men. Earthly judges refer to ſtatutes as the rule of their deciſions; men are tried by the laws of their country, and becauſe human faculties are limited and imperfect, the memory unretentive, the underſtanding liable to error, the heart warped by partial affections, facts muſt be preſerved in

in written documents, to prevent alteration or miſtake, the law expreſſed in clear and diſtinct terms, and the cauſe, not the perſon of the party, held up as the object of judgment. But what need of books or of records to aſſiſt the memory of Him who is omniſcience, to whom are known all his own works, and all the ways of men from the foundation of the world; whoſe will is the law; and who knows no diſtinction but that between truth and falſehood, right and wrong? What need of external evidence, of the teſtimony of others, when every man carries the evidence in his own boſom, and is acquitted or condemned of his own conſcience? What, O man, are the contents of theſe awful books? The words thou art now ſpeaking, the purſuits in which thou art now engaged, the ſpirit by which thou art now actuated. Thou art every day filling up the record, with thy hand enrolling thine own honour or ſhame; and the unfolding of that day ſhall reveal that only which thou thyſelf haſt written. On thyſelf it reſts whether the laſt ſolemn diſcovery is to cover thee with everlaſting contempt, or to crown thee with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory; whether the opening of the book of life is to diſplay thy name in golden characters to angels and men, or the regiſter of condemnation conſign thee to everlaſting puniſhment. The book that ſhall be opened is none other than the book of ſcripture, the infallible rule of faith and manners, and according as thou art conformed unto, falleſt ſhort of, or exceedeſt that ſtandard, ſo ſhall thy doom be.

They were judged every man according to their works. In this mixed and imperfect ſtate, it frequently happens that the guilty eſcape, and the innocent ſuffer. "The fathers eat ſour grapes, and the children's teeth are ſet on edge." Princes play the madman, and quarrel, and fight, and myriads of unoffending wretches pay the forfeit of that folly. But before yonder tribunal every one appears to anſwer for himſelf; every one comes to reap the fruit of his own doings.

"Enter

"Enter not into judgment with thy ſervant, O God, for in thy ſight ſhall no fleſh living be juſtified." "If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?" "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindneſs, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my tranſgreſſions." "Behold, O God, our Shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed."

In meditating on this ſubject, let us learn to forbear from exerciſing this dread prerogative of the Eternal, let us refrain from judging. God has challenged this right with emphatic ſolemnity as his own: "Judgment *is mine*, *I* will repay, ſaith the Lord." "All judgment is committed unto the Son." "Therefore thou art inexcuſeable, O man, whoſoever thou art that judgeſt: for wherein thou judgeſt another, thou condemneſt thyſelf; for thou that judgeſt doeſt the ſame things. But we are ſure that the judgment of God is according to truth, againſt them which commit ſuch things. And thinkeſt thou this, O man, that judgeſt them which do ſuch things, and doeſt the ſame, that thou ſhalt eſcape the judgment of God? Or deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardneſs and impenitent heart, treaſureſt up unto thyſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs; indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil, of the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile. But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Gentile.

Gentile. For there is no reſpect of perſons with God."*

But while by every ſerious conſideration thou art reſtrained, ignorant fallible creature, from judging another,—by every ſerious conſideration thou art encouraged, conſtrained to examine and to judge thyſelf. It may be the means of preventing, of averting the righteous judgment of God. It will lead thee to the diſcovery of thy own weakneſs, and thereby become a ſource of wiſdom and ſtrength. It will unfold the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and the treachery of thine own heart, and lead thee in trembling hope to the blood of ſprinkling, which taketh away the ſin of the world. It will render thee compaſſionate and gentle to the infirmities of others, becauſe that thou alſo haſt ſinned. It will produce "godly ſorrow, which worketh repentance unto ſalvation, not to be repented of." It will render the promiſes of "mercy to pardon, and of grace to help in every time of need," precious to thy ſoul. It will help to regulate thy path through life, and diminiſh the terrors of death.

Finally, habitual and rooted impreſſions of a judgment to come, will ſerve as a ſupport under the raſh cenſures and the unjuſt deciſions of men. From the ſtrife of tongues, from the hatred of a mercileſs world, you can retire to the ſilent feaſt of a conſcience void of offence; and with confidence appeal from the angry tribunal of a creature like thyſelf, to Him who knoweth thy heart, who ſeeth in ſecret, and will reward thee openly. "Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely for my ſake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth?" Behold that "great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ſtanding before the throne, and before

* Rom. ii. 1—11.

before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and crying with a loud voice, ſaying, Salvation unto our God, which ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." "What are theſe which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?" "Theſe are they which came out of great tribulation, and have waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and ſerve him day and night in his temple: and he that ſitteth on the throne ſhall dwell among them. They ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more, neither ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midſt of the throne ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes." *

* Rev. vii. 9—17.

Hiſtory

History of Moſes.

LECTURE II.

NUMBERS xxi. 4—9.

And they journeyed from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compaſs the land of Edom: and the ſoul of the people was much diſcouraged becauſe of the way. And the people ſpake againſt God, and againſt Moſes, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderneſs? for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our ſoul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord ſent fiery ſerpents among the people; and they bit the people, and much people of Iſrael died. Therefore the people came to Moſes, and ſaid, We have ſinned, for we have ſpoken againſt the Lord, and againſt thee; pray unto the Lord that he take away the ſerpents from us: and Moſes prayed for the people. And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Make thee a fiery ſerpent, and ſet it upon a pole: and it ſhall come to paſs that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, ſhall live. And Moſes made a ſerpent of braſs, and put it upon a pole, and it came to paſs, that if a ſerpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the ſerpent of braſs, he lived.

THE reſtleſsneſs, peeviſhneſs and diſcontent which men are continually expreſſing, prove at once the degeneracy and corruption of human nature, and furniſh a ſtrong preſumption of the immortality of the ſoul.

To

To behold one generation after another, of moping, melancholy, ſullen, ſurly beings, in the midſt of an overflowing profuſion of bleſſings, charging God fooliſhly, tormenting themſelves unneceſſarily, and diſturbing others maliciouſly, clearly demonſtrates, that man is alienated from his Maker, at variance with himſelf, and unkindly diſpoſed towards his brother: in other words, that he is a fallen, corrupted creature. To behold men, whatever they have attained, whatever they poſſeſs, forgetting the things which are behind, and eagerly reaching forward to thoſe which are before, the eye never ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the ear with hearing, is a preſumption at leaſt, if not a proof, that we are deſigned of our Creator for ſomething this world has not to beſtow; that ſome principle in our nature is ſuperior to the groſs and grovelling purſuits in which we are warmly engaged, but in which we find and we take no reſt; and thus the very miſery we feel is a preſentiment of the felicity which we were created to enjoy. But, alas! our diſſatisfaction with ſublunary good things, "the things which are ſeen and temporal," is not the reſult of experience, nor the reſignation of a mind humbled to the will of God. No, it is the miſerable effect and expreſſion of inſatiable deſire, of unmortified pride, of diſappointed ambition. If we arrive at our object with eaſe, its value is diminiſhed by the facility of acquiſition; if obſtacles lie in the way, and poſſeſſion be removed by diſtance of time and ſpace, we are quickly diſcouraged, and timidly give up the purſuit. When empty, there is no end of our complaints; when full, we loathe and reject the beſt things: if we ſucceed, our proſperity deſtroys us with folly, inſolence and ſelf-indulgence; if we fail, we are undone through ſhame, chagrin and reſentment; if we ſhun the rock of "vanity" on the one ſide, we are ſucked into the whirlpool of "vexation of ſpirit" upon the other.

The hiſtory of Iſrael is, in truth, the hiſtory of human nature. Did they diſcover a ſtubbornneſs which no calamity could tame, no kindneſs could mollify: a levity which no ſteadineſs of diſcipline could fix, a perfidiouſneſs which no plea can excuſe, an ingratitude which no partiality can extenuate, a ſtupidity which no intelligence can account for, a timidity and a raſhneſs which no reaſon can explain? Alas, we need not travel to the deſerts of Arabia, nor look back to the days of the golden calf, nor of the waters of Meribah, for the perſons who diſcovered ſuch a ſpirit. We have but to look into our own hearts, we have but to review our own lives, in order to be ſatisfied, that ſuch a ſpirit has exiſted, that it is ſhamefully odious in itſelf, highly offenſive in the ſight of God, and that we have good reaſon to abhor ourſelves, "and repent in duſt and aſhes."

We have purſued the hiſtory of Aaron and of Balaam, in a continued ſeries, that we might proſecute the remainder of the hiſtory of Moſes, without any farther interruption; we therefore omitted in its proper place that portion of it, which is partly recorded in the verſes I have read: but it is of infinitely too great importance to be paſſed over wholly in ſilence, and therefore we look back, and bring it into view, as an uſeful ſubject of meditation this evening.

Moſes had lately deſcended from Mount Hor, whither he had been ſummoned to perform the laſt offices of humanity to Aaron, his brother: with mixed emotions, no doubt, which alternately marked the man and the believer: mourning and mortified, yet patient, compoſed and reſigned to the will of Heaven. In executing ſentence of death upon his brother, he heard the voice of God again pronouncing his own doom; a doom in which, with the ordinary feelings of humanity, he acquieſces with reluctance, but muſt however acquieſce. But though death was before his eyes, and could be at no great diſtance, it abates nothing of his ardour for the glory of God, and the good of Iſrael;

Israel; it breaks in upon no duty of his station, it disturbs not the benevolence, gentleness and serenity of his temper: he lives, acts, instructs to the very last; and exhibits an instructive example of that happy firmness and equanimity of soul, removed alike from stoical indifference, and contempt of death, and fond, infirm, unreasonable attachment to life. We find him accordingly in his 120th year, and the last of his life, not only engaged in employments suitable to age, those of deliberating, advising and instructing; but exerting all the activity and vigour of youth, in planning and executing sundry military enterprises.

We should be surprised, did we not know the cause of it, to find Israel in the fortieth year from their deliverance out of Egypt, just where we saw them the first month, by the way of the Red Sea, journeying from Mount Hor; and even then, though every thing seemed to be pressing them forwards to the possession of Canaan, not led of their heavenly Guide directly forwards in the nearest tract, but obliged to fetch a compass round the whole land of Edom, the possession allotted to, and already bestowed upon the posterity of Esau. But Israel, and in them mankind, was thereby instructed to revere the destinations of Providence, to respect the rights, property and privileges of others; that reason and religion, as well as sympathy and humanity, oblige a man to submit to the inconveniency of a journey somewhat more tedious and fatiguing, instead of attempting to cut a nearer passage for himself, through the bowels and blood of his brother.

The consciousness of having acted well, in taking this circuitous march round the land of Edom, and that they thus acted by the command of God, ought to have reconciled the minds of these Israelites to the little inconveniences of the way; but their historian and leader, with his usual fidelity, informs us, that "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."

Men frequently do their duty with so ill a grace, that it becomes as offensive as downright disobedience; the manner of compliance has the air of a refusal. God loves cheerfulness in every thing: a cheerful, liberal giver; a cheerful, thankful receiver; a cheerful, active doer; a cheerful, patient sufferer. And what an alleviating consideration is it, under the pressure of whatever calamity! "This burden is imposed on me by the hand of my heavenly Father; this is a sore evil, but God can turn it into good." "This affliction is not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it shall yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness." When we are out of humour at one thing, we are dissatisfied with every person, and every thing; a harsh spirit and a hasty tongue spare neither God nor man. "The people spoke against God, and against Moses. Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread."

Objects viewed through the medium of passion, like those strange uncouth appearances which are seen in glasses of a certain construction, have little or no resemblance to what they are in nature and truth. They are distorted and disfigured; magnified to such a degree as to become hideous, or diminished so as to become imperceptible; and according to the fit of the moment, men turn the one end or the other of the perspective to the eye, and what they contemplate is accordingly removed to a great distance, and reduced to nothing, or brought nigh, enlarged, and brightened up. Employing this false kind of optics, Israel now considers Egypt and all its hardships with desire and regret, and looks forward to Canaan with coldness and distrust. The miraculous stream that followed them from the rock is no water at all, and manna, angel's food, is accounted light bread. We are too little aware of the sinfulness and folly of discontent, and therefore indulge in it without fear or reserve.

We

We do not reflect that it is to arraign at once the wisdom and goodness of God; to rob him of the right of judgment, and madly to increase the evil which was too heavy before.

In general, the righteous Governor of the world permits this evil affection to punish itself; and can there be a greater punishment, than to leave a sullen, dissatisfied wretch to devour his own spleen? But in the instance before us, he was provoked to superadd to this mental plague, a grievous external chastisement. "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died." These might be the natural production of the wilderness, but providentially armed for the occasion with a greater malignancy of poison, or produced in greater abundance, or roused to a higher degree of ferocity. For what are the instruments which God employs to avenge himself of his enemies? He needs not to create a new thing in the earth; the simplest creature can do it. Nature, animate and inanimate, is ready to take up his quarrel; the frost or the fire, continued a little longer, or rendered a little more intense, will soon subdue the proudest of his adversaries. It is not the least of the miracles of divine mercy, that Israel had been preserved so long from the fury of those noxious insects with which the desert swarmed, as Moses justly remarks in recapitulating the history of God's goodness to that people during a forty years pilgrimage. "Lest thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint." *

The rage of these dreadful creatures, which had been during so long a period by a supernatural power

* Deut. viii. 14, 15.

er ſuppreſſed, now freed from that curb, becomes a party too ſtrong for a mighty hoſt, fluſhed with recent victory. While therefore we adore and admire the goodneſs which multiplies the neceſſary and uſeful part of the vegetable and animal tribes with ſuch aſtoniſhing liberality, and limits thoſe which are noxious with ſuch conſummate wiſdom and irreſiſtible power, let us tremble to think how eaſily he can remove the barrier which reſtrains the wrath of the creature, and arm a fly with force ſufficient for our deſtruction. But the intention of God in puniſhing is correction and amendment, not ruin; returning mercy therefore meets the firſt ſymptoms of repentance, and a remedy is pointed out the moment that miſery is felt; which ſweetly diſcloſes to us the meltings of fatherly affection, outrunning and preventing filial wretchedneſs.

But what ſtrange method of cure have we here? The poiſon of a ſerpent counteracted, and its malignity deſtroyed, not by an external application, not by the virtue of an antidote poſſeſſed of certain natural qualities, but by a bleſſing annexed to the uſe of an inſtrument in itſelf inadequate, and an action of the patient himſelf, flowing from his own will, and called forth by the appointment and command of God. The author of that excellent book, entitled the Wiſdom of Solomon, has a beautiful reference to this ſtory, when he ſays,

"For when the horrible fierceneſs of wild beaſts came upon theſe, and they periſhed with the ſtings of crooked ſerpents, thy wrath endured not forever. But they were troubled for a ſmall ſeaſon, that they might be admoniſhed, having a ſign of ſalvation, to put them in remembrance of the commandment of thy law. For he that turned towards it, was not ſaved by the thing that he ſaw, but by thee, that art the Saviour of all. And in this thou madeſt thine enemies

mies confeſs, that it is thou who delivereſt from all evil." *

But the grand commentary on the hiſtory of the fiery ſerpents is furniſhed by Chriſt himſelf, in his converſation with Nicodemus, the Jewiſh ruler. "As Moſes lifted up the ſerpent in the wilderneſs, even ſo muſt the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have eternal life." †

From this it is evident that many particulars in the Jewiſh hiſtory and political economy, had an intereſt and importance which extended far beyond the preſent moment, or the ſenſible and obvious appearance of things. And in this particular inſtance our bleſſed Lord has furniſhed us with an inſtructive example, which ought to ſerve as a rule, for the application and uſe of figurative, allegorical, and typical ſubjects. Here he enters into no detail; purſues no parrallel or contraſt through a multiplicity of particulars; furniſhes no wings to the imagination; but fixing on one great, general view of the ſubject, renders it thereby more powerful and impreſſive. He was converſing with a ruler of the Jews; was explaining to him the nature and end of his own miſſion; was deducing the nature and tendency of the goſpel diſpenſation from the eſtabliſhed rites of the Moſaic, and the received facts of the Jewiſh hiſtory, with which Nicodemus was perfectly well acquainted. In this caſe he refers to a noted event, and appeals from it to one which was ſhortly to take place, betwixt which a ſtriking line of reſemblance ſhould be apparent—The elevation of the brazen ſerpent in the wilderneſs, for the healing of the Iſraelites who were periſhing by the envenomed ſtings of the fiery ſerpents—and the elevation of the Son of Man upon the croſs, the propitiation for the ſins of the world; that when this laſt diſplay of the divine juſtice and mercy ſhould be exhibited, Nicodemus, and every intelligent and honeſt diſciple of Moſes, might

* Wiſdom, ch. xvi. † John, ch. iii. 14, 15.

might be satisfied that "God had at sundry times, and in divers manners," presented as in a glass to the fathers, the method of redemption by Jesus Christ.

All the application, then, which the words of the Saviour himself warrant us to make of this passage to him, is reduced to a few obvious and striking particulars. "Fools," such as the Israelites in the desert, and transgressors of the divine law in general, "because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." *

The root of the evil, the cause of the plague, is to be found in human perversity and disobedience. The faithful and obedient sleeps safe and secure in the lion's den; to the proud and rebellious the innoxious worm is converted into a fiery serpent, full of deadly poison. The remedy for this sore evil is to be traced up to the divine compassion, power and goodness.

The means of cure are not such as human wisdom would have devised, or the reason of man approved; they are the sovereign appointment of Heaven. The effect is preternatural, yet real; and reason rejoices in what it could not have discovered. The sight of a lifeless serpent of metal working as an antidote to the mortal poison of one alive; incredible, absurd! Such was the doctrine of the cross in the eyes of prejudice, and philosophy, "and science, falsely so called." "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this

* Psal. cvii. 17—20.

this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews, a stumbling-block; and unto the Greeks, foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." *

The virtue flowed from the divine appointment, operating together with the believing act of the patient. To the sufferer who averts his face, or wilfully and contemptuously shuts his eyes, that banner is displayed in vain; no virtue issues from it, he perishes in his unbelief. To the despiser, the impenitent, the careless, Christ has died in vain. In the extension of all God's acts of grace to men, to produce the full effect, there must of necessity be an unity of design and exertion between the giver and the receiver, between him who acts and him who is acted upon. Man's body is "dust of the ground," mere matter, separated from the spirit, incapable of motion or direction. Even that active, penetrating organ, the eye, is but a little lump of pellucid clay, till the vital principle, the breath of God, kindle its fires, and direct its rays. It is this vital principle which, proceeding from God, exists in him, and possesses the power of rising and returning to him. The believing Israelite hears, in dying agonies, the proclamation of deliverance, lifts up his drooping head, looks, and is healed; his will meets the will of God, and the cure is already performed. The perishing sinner hears the voice of the Son of God and lives. Lifted up upon the cross he utters his voice, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." † One of his fellow sufferers hardens his heart and reviles him, turns from the Saviour with disdain, and dies impenitent—the other hears with rapture

* 1 Cor. ch. i. 18—24. † Isai. xlv. 22.

rapture the joyful ſound, clings to the hope of ſalvation, prays in faith, and paſſes with him into paradiſe.

But the circumſtance on which Chriſt chiefly reſts, is Moſes "*lifting up* the ſerpent in the wilderneſs." Moſes probably had not a clear apprehenſion of the extenſive meaning and import of the act he was performing, any more than the dying men who were the ſubjects of the cure. They looked no farther than the preſent moment, and for relief from a malady which affected the body. But, like the high-prieſt in later times, they were propheſying, without being conſcious of it. He was erecting, and the congregation in the wilderneſs contemplating an anticipated repreſentation of the great medium of ſalvation, which God had appointed from the foundation of the world; and had, in a variety of other predictions, circumſtantially declared and deſcribed at different periods to mankind. Theſe predictions were ſlumbering unnoticed, neglected, miſunderſtood, even by the wiſe and prudent, in the ſacred volume a dead letter, till Chriſt, their quickening ſpirit, gave them life and motion, and a meaning which they had not before.

In the ſcene that paſſed in the wilderneſs we behold the ſhadow of good things to come, a prefiguration of the death which Chriſt ſhould die. He is here "evidently ſet forth crucified before us," according to his own words, deſcriptive of "the deceaſe which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."*

This ſame idea, we have juſt obſerved, had been ſuggeſted by the evangelical prophet Iſaiah, and a ſimilar expreſſion is put into the Saviour's mouth by that harbinger of the Prince of Peace. "Look unto me and be ye ſaved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none elſe."

And in another place, ſpeaking of goſpel times, "At that day ſhall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes ſhall have reſpect to the Holy One of Iſrael."†

Thus

* John xii. 32. † Iſai. xvii. 7.

Thus was Moſes, by what he did, and Iſaiah, by what he wrote, pointing out to the world one and the ſame great object, Chriſt Jeſus, "the end of the law for righteouſneſs;" the ſubſtance of the types; the accompliſhment of prophecy and promiſe; the bruiſer of the ſerpent's head; the reſtorer of defaced, defiled, degraded humanity. And thus we are taught to regard with peculiar reſpect, an event which Providence has, in ſo many different ways, rendered illuſtriouſly conſpicuous; the death of Chriſt, on the accurſed tree.

We ſhall have exhibited to you all that Moſes and the prophets, all that the hiſtorian and the evangeliſt have ſuggeſted, on the ſubject of the brazen ſerpent, when we have led your attention to the impious and idolatrous uſe made of it in after times. That this illuſtrious inſtrument of Iſrael's deliverance in the wilderneſs, ſhould be carefully preſerved, as a monument of the divine power and goodneſs, and by length of time acquire venerability and reſpect among the other valuable memorials of antiquity, is not to be wondered at. But every thing may be perverted; and a corrupt diſpoſition has ever manifeſted itſelf in man, to exalt into the place of God, ſomething that is not God. Accordingly we find, about eight centuries from its original fabrication, even in the days of Hezekiah, the brazen ſerpent exalted to divine honours, and a beſotted people rendering that homage to the mean, which was due only to the hand which employed it. The zeal of that pious prince, therefore, is worthy of commendation, who, in reforming the abuſes of religion, which prevailed at the time that he mounted the throne of Judah, aboliſhed this among the reſt. Regardleſs of the purpoſe for which it was at firſt framed; of the venerable hand which formed and reared it, and of the lapſe of ſo many years which had ſtamped reſpect upon it, "he brake in pieces the brazen ſerpent which Moſes had made; for unto thoſe days the children of Iſrael did burn incenſe to it, and he

he called it Nehuſhtan,"* by way of contempt—*a piece of braſs.*

On this part of the hiſtory of Moſes, pagan antiquity has founded the fabulous hiſtory of Eſculapius, the pretended god of medicine, whoſe ſymbol was a ſerpent twiſted round a rod. The learned have, through a variety of particulars, traced the derivation of the fable from the fact; but to repeat them, would rather miniſter to curioſity than to inſtruction and improvement. We diſmiſs the ſubject, then, with this general remark, that in more reſpects than is commonly apprehended, and than it has had the candour to acknowledge, is pagan literature indebted to the ſacred volume; that the wiſdom of Egypt, of Babylon, of Greece and of Rome is traceable up to this ſource; that Moſes is, of courſe, to be conſidered as the father of profane, as of ſacred learning, from whom all ſubſequent hiſtorians, legiſlators, orators and poets have derived the lights which directed them in their ſeveral purſuits; that to the pure ſource of all wiſdom, the revelation from heaven, in a word, the world is indebted for the firſt principles of ſcience, morality and religion; which appear to the attentive and diſcerning eye through the miſt in which credulous ignorance or bold fiction have involved them.

Let us hence be encouraged to revere the ſcriptures, to ſearch and compare them; to derive our opinions of religious ſubjects from that ſacred ſource, inſtead of forcing the truth of God into an awkward ſupporter of our preconceived opinions. Above all, let it be our concern to regulate our conduct by the laws which ſcripture has laid down, and to comfort our hearts by the hope it inſpires, and the proſpects which it has unfolded. Amen.

* 2 Kings xviii. 4.

History of Moſes.

LECTURE III.

NUMBERS xxvii. 12, 13, 14.

And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Get thee up into this Mount Abarim, and ſee the land which I have given unto the children of Iſrael. And when thou haſt ſeen it, thou alſo ſhalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled againſt my commandment in the deſert of Zin, in the ſtrife of the congregation, to ſanctify me at the water before their eyes. That is the water of Meribah in Kadeſh, in the wilderneſs of Zin.

THERE is ſomething peculiarly intereſting in hearing a plain, honeſt, intelligent man, without vanity, or ſelf-ſufficiency, or affected humility, talking of himſelf; going into the detail of his own hiſtory, with the ſame fidelity and ſimplicity as if it were the hiſtory of a ſtranger; unfolding his heart without reſerve, diſcloſing his faults and infirmities without palliation, recording his wiſe and virtuous actions without oſtentation; and relating events, with all their little circumſtances, according to the feelings which they excited at the moment.

It is pleaſant to ſee an old man, with his faculties unimpaired, his ſpirits cheerful, his temper ſweet, his conſcience clear, his proſpects bright; enjoying life without

without fearing death; blending the modesty and benevolence of youth with the wisdom and dignity of age. There is a double satisfaction in hearing such a one describe persons whom he knew, scenes in which he acted, expeditions which he conducted, schemes which he planned and executed.

And such an one was Moses, who having, by divine inspiration, made the ages and generations before the flood to pass in review, and unfolded the history of redemption, in its connexion with the system of nature and the ways of Providence, during a period of two thousand five hundred years; having admitted us to his familiarity and friendly instruction during an eventful life of one hundred and twenty years, is now, with the same calmness and ease, admitting us to contemplate his behaviour in the immediate prospect, and up to the very hour of his death.

The idolatrous defection of Israel in the plains of Moab, had been visited with a plague which swept away twenty-four thousand of them. Immediately on the staying of that terrible calamity, Moses is commanded, with the assistance of Eleazer the high priest, to take the number of the people, from twenty years old and upwards, and to compare the muster roll of the day, with that taken in the wilderness of Sinai, thirty-eight years before. This being done with all possible accuracy, two most singular facts turn up, each singular considered separately and by itself, and both most singular, taken in their connexion one with another. In a multitude so great, and at the distance of thirty-eight years, the whole difference is no more than one thousand eight hundred and twenty men: for, at the former period, the number of men of a military age was six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty; and at the latter, six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty. But though the strength of the host was nearly the same, the individuals whereof it was composed were totally changed; two names alone of so many myriads stood upon both

both lists, Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun, for Moses himself was under sentence of condemnation; he was not to be permitted to pass over Jordan; he was already numbered with the dead.

The course of nature, it is true, is continually producing a similar effect on the human race, upon the whole; but there is a degree of exactness in this instance, not to be accounted for on common principles, and which must be resolved into a special interposition of Providence, which had pronounced the doom of death on the whole body of offenders, in the moment of transgression, and at the same instant, promised the reward of fidelity and obedience to those illustrious two; longevity and the possession of Canaan. Vain therefore is the hope of so much as one guilty person escaping in a crowd, groundless the fear of singular goodness suffering in the midst of many wicked.

It is related of Xerxes, king of Persia, much to the honour of his humanity, that surveying from an eminence the vast army with which he was advancing to the invasion of Greece, he burst into tears to think that in less than one hundred years they should all be cut off from the land of the living. What then, O Moses, were the emotions of thy soul, to see the event which Xerxes but anticipated, realized before thine eyes? To walk through the ranks of Israel without meeting one man who followed thee out of Egypt, with whom thou couldst mingle the tears of sympathy over so many fallen, or remind of the joy and wonder of that great deliverance? Is not that man already dead, who has survived all his cotemporaries? A consideration, among many others, powerfully calculated to reconcile the mind to the thoughts of dissolution, and to impress on the soul the sentiment of the wise man concerning the world, "I hate it, I would not live always."

Long life, however, is not the less to be considered as a blessing. The love of it is a constitutional law of our

our nature; and the promise of it is annexed to the sanctions of the written law, as a motive to obedience; "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee:"* and it is here bestowed as a reward on the faithful. Premature death, in like manner, is an object of natural horror, is threatened in anger, and inflicted as a punishment. "The wicked shall not live half his days, and his memory shall rot." In general, a wise and merciful God hides from the eyes of men the era of their departure out of the world. The bitterness of death consists in the foretaste, and the forerunners of that great enemy. That bitterness, in its full proportion, was wrung out, and mingled in the cup of Moses. The death of every Israelite was a death-warning to him. He had lately ascended Mount Hor with Aaron his brother, stript him of his garments, closed his eyes to his last long sleep, and descended without him: and Mount Hor is only a few steps distant from Mount Abarim, and his own summons comes at length. He is respited, not pardoned, and a reprieve of forty years is now expired.

It is in that awful, trying hour, we are at this time to trace the character, and mark the behaviour of the man of God.

From the moment he fell under the divine displeasure, which shortened the date of his life, we observe it lying with an oppressive weight upon his mind. The love of life manifests itself, and we behold in the prophet, the man of like passions with ourselves. There is no incident of his life on which he dwells so much, and with such earnestness of interest as this. The history of his offence is again and again repeated, not in the view of extenuating the guilt of it, but to vindicate the righteous judgment of God. The excellence of this part of his narrative, is its departing from the direct line of narration. He hastens forward to bring it

* Exod. xx. 12.

it early into view; he returns again upon his foot-steps, and presents it a second time to view. Is he reminding Israel of their rebellion and disobedience? his own transgression, and the punishment of it, arise and stare him in the face. Is he encouraging them in their progress towards the promised land? he sighs to think that he himself shall never enter into it. At one time he flatters himself with the hope that justice might perhaps relent, and presumes to expostulate and entreat, in terms earnest and pathetic, such as these; "O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what god is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon."*

At another time, he seems quietly to give up the cause as lost, and patiently prepares to meet his fate, and meekly resigns himself to the will of the Most High, which he was unable to alter. In a word, we see him at once the man and the believer, and a pattern well worthy of imitation in both respects.

It is impossible to observe the conflict of Moses's soul, when this cup of trembling was put into his hands, without thinking of the bitter agony in the garden, of the travail of the Redeemer's soul, of that passionate address, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—of "sweat like great drops of blood falling down to the ground"†—of the triumph of resignation, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done"—of "humiliation to death, the death of the cross." Thus it "behoved him to fulfil all righteousness." Thus he taught men to obey the law of God, to use all lawful endeavours to preserve life; and thus he inculcated submission to that sovereign will which it is unprofitable and impious to resist.

* Deut. iii. 24, 25. † Luke xxii. 42—44.

"Get thee up," ſaid God to Moſes, "into this Mount Abarim, and ſee the land which I have given unto the children of Iſrael;"* and this is all that the law can do for the guilty; it conducts to an adjoining eminence, it ſpreads a diſtant proſpect of Canaan, it can diſplay its beauty and fertility, it can inſpire the deſire of poſſeſſion; but it cannot divide Jordan, it cannot lead to victory over the laſt enemy, it cannot make "the comer thereunto perfect," nor eſtabliſh the ſoul in everlaſting reſt. Neither Moſes, the giver of the law, nor Aaron, the high-prieſt, under the law, could "continue by reaſon of death." But the Apoſtle and High-Prieſt of our profeſſion is "entered into the holieſt of all," has opened a paſſage through the gates of death, to life and immortality; lifted up, firſt upon the croſs, and then to his throne in the heavens, he is drawing all men unto him.

Together with the honeſt though fond attachment to life, which characterizes the man, and the pious reſignation which marks the child of God, Moſes diſcovers, on this occaſion, that excellent ſpirit which ſinks and loſes the individual in the public. He cheerfully gives up his perſonal ſuit, and the cauſe of Iſrael henceforth engroſſes him wholly. "And Moſes ſpake unto the Lord, ſaying, Let the Lord, the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh, ſet a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as ſheep which have no ſhepherd."†

Let modern patriots think of this, and bluſh at their pride and ſelfiſhneſs. But they are loſt to all ſenſe of decency, they keep each other in countenance by their multitude and confidence, and "glory in their ſhame." This noble conduct of the Jewiſh legiſlator was not the affectation of virtue and public ſpirit, the oſtentatious boaſting of a man who had no proſpect, or a diſtant one, of being put to the trial; but the native

* Deut. xvii. 12, 13. † Numb. xxvii. 15—17.

tive greatneſs and ſuperiority of a mind occupied with two grand objects, the glory of God, and the good of his country; a mind that could rejoice in the advancement of an inferior, and decreaſe with inward ſatisfaction, while the other increaſed. Ordinary men look with an evil eye upon their ſucceſſors. A prince and his heir, though that heir be his own ſon, generally live upon indifferent terms; but Moſes ſees his dignity departing from himſelf in his life time, departing from his family, given to his ſervant, without a murmur, without a ſigh. It was enough to him that God had been pleaſed to adopt Joſhua, for the purpoſe of finiſhing his work, of introducing Iſrael into their inheritance. It is no ſooner intimated to him, than Joſhua becomes his ſon, his brother, his friend: and he proceeds to his inſtallation with as much alacrity, as he inveſted Aaron with the pontifical robes.

This ſolemn ceremony conſiſted of a variety of circumſtances, which are well worthy of our attention; from their being of divine appointment, from their great antiquity, from their inexplicable myſterioufneſs, or their obvious ſignificancy. Joſhua was already anointed with the unction of the Spirit: he was a perſon of ſingular piety, undaunted reſolution, and unſhaken fidelity: he had long attended upon Moſes as his miniſter, had accompanied him into the mount, when he aſcended to meet God, had traverſed the land of Canaan as one of the ſpies, had brought up its good report, and ſtood firm with Caleb in reſiſting the timid and diſcouraging repreſentations of his colleagues. He poſſeſſed all the qualities natural, acquired, and miraculouſly diſpenſed, which were requiſite to the diſcharge of the duties of that high and important ſtation to which Providence was now calling him. By the ſpirit which is ſaid to have been in Joſhua, ſome underſtand the ſpirit of prophecy, or ſupernatural powers of foreſeeing and providing for future events. By taking in every circumſtance, it ſeems rather to

denote those rare gifts with which nature had so liberally endowed him; wisdom, and courage, and strength, and which Providence was now calling forth for the general benefit. But though thus amply furnished for his great undertaking, God was pleased to command a solemn and public declaration of his choice, and that the object of it should, before the eyes of the people, be set apart by the imposition of the hands of Moses to the office assigned him.

Forms are necessary, because men are not spiritual; forms are interposed, that the understanding, the heart and the conscience may be approached through the channels of sense. And of all forms, recommended by divine authority, and its own significant simplicity, that of the laying on of hands is one of the most ancient, most frequently in use, and most striking. By this solemn rite, the devoted victim was set apart for death, and the guilt of the offerer transferred, as it were, and laid upon the head of the oblation: and thus were the minister of the sanctuary, the general, the statesman, dedicated to the duties of their respective stations: thus new and extraordinary powers were conferred upon Joshua: thus Jesus took leave of his disciples, and left a blessing behind him, more precious than the mantle of Elijah. "He led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them."*

By laying on of the apostles' hands, miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were communicated; and by laying on of the hands of the presbytery, Timothy was solemnly set apart for exercising the office of a bishop; and thus a great part of the christian world continues to instal its ministers in the pastoral office.

Moses was farther commanded "to cause Joshua to stand before Eleazar the priest," who was probably to offer up sacrifice in behalf of the commander elect, and by this additional solemnity to impress both upon his own mind and upon those of the spectators, the weight

* Luke xxiv. 50.

weight and importance of the ſacred charge committed unto him. It is added, verſe 20th, "And thou ſhalt put ſome of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Iſrael may be obedient."

This is interpreted by ſome commentators, of thoſe rays of glory, which are ſuppoſed to have ſurrounded the head of Moſes, ever ſince his deſcent from God in the mount, and which ſo dazzled the eyes of the beholder, that in ſpeaking to the people he was under the neceſſity of putting a veil over his face. By the impoſition of his hands upon the head of Joſhua, according to the commandment, this external, ſenſible honour is underſtood to have been communicated from the one to the other, and that, in conſequence of it, Joſhua henceforth wore a viſible token of the choice of Heaven.

Conjecture and fancy blend too much in this expoſition, to procure for it a very high degree of reſpect. Juſter and more ſober criticiſm explain the paſſage as implying, that Moſes ſhould immediately aſſociate Joſhua with himſelf in the executive powers of government, devolve upon him a ſhare both of the reſpect and the care which pertained to the ſupreme command; that he might enjoy the ſatisfaction, while he yet lived, and which he ſo much deſired, of beholding a wiſe and a good man conducting the Iſraelitiſh affairs, in church and ſtate, with diſcretion, and carrying on the plan of Providence to its conſummation.

There is another article in the injunction laid upon Moſes, reſpecting the appointment of his ſucceſſor, which has greatly exerciſed and puzzled the critics. "And he ſhall ſtand before Eleazar the prieſt, who ſhall aſk counſel for him, after the judgment of Urim, before the Lord; at his word ſhall they go out, and at his word they ſhall come in, both he and all the children of Iſrael with him, even all the congregation."* The

* Numb. xxvii. 21.

The difficulty is, what was the Urim, and the judgment of Urim, of which Eleazar was to ask counsel in behalf of Joshua, and wherein Moses differed from Joshua as to this? Urim is, in general, in scripture, found in connexion with Thummim. The words import *light* and *perfection;* and they appear to have been some part or appendage of the breast-plate, that essential article of the high-priest's dress. They were not, it is alleged, the production of human skill, like the other particulars of the sacred clothing, for there is no account of their fabrication by the hands of man; but when the breast-plate was finished, Moses, we are told, "put into it the Urim and the Thummim," whatever they were, immediately from God.

The method of consultation has also furnished ample matter of dispute. The most approved tradition is this, for scripture gives but few, and those very general hints, upon the subject, the person who desired to consult the oracle, (and none but public persons, and on great public occasions, were admitted to that privilege,) intimated his intention to the high-priest; who, at the hour of incense, arrayed in his pontifical vestments, entered the holy place, accompanied at a little distance by the magistrate or general, who made the inquiry. The high-priest placed himself with his face towards the entrance of the most holy place. The veil which separated the holy place from the holy of holies, was drawn up for the occasion, so that he stood directly fronting the ark of the covenant, overshadowed by the cherubim, where the Schechinah, or visible glory, resided. The inquirer then standing behind, pronounced the question, or consultation, in a few plain words; such for example as these, "Shall I go up against the Philistines, or shall I not go up?" This question was again repeated solemnly and distinctly by the high-priest before the Lord: and on looking downwards upon the Urim in the breast-plate, the

* Numb. xxvii. 21.

the answer of God was seen in characters of reflected light, from the excellent glory, and which the high-priest audibly repeated in the ears of the party concerned. "Go;" or, "Thou shalt not go."

When the oracle refused to give any response, as in the case of Saul, it was considered as a mark of high displeasure. God would not answer that wicked prince "by the judgment of Urim," but because he had wilfully forsaken God, an offended God, in just displeasure, gave him up to ask counsel of hell, and to follow it to his own destruction. "We have also," christians, "a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed; as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."*

Joshua being referred to this mode of consultation, compared with the history of Moses, points out the difference between these two leaders of Israel. "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."†

God manifested himself immediately unto Moses; conversed with him as a man with his friend. Joshua was kept at a greater distance, and enjoyed communion with God through the intervention of appointed means. Just as before Moses was admitted to the very summit of the mount, received within the veil of thick darkness, which at once concealed and revealed the divine glory; while Joshua was confined to a lower region, kept in the place and on the duty of a servant. But we must conclude.

The whole scene that has now passed in review, speaks directly to the heart and conscience. It presents a striking and instructive instance of the goodness and severity of God. The faults and infirmities of his dearest children he neither overlooks, nor forgets to punish. For one offence, and seemingly a slight one, Moses is excluded from Canaan. No humiliation, penitence or entreaty can, of themselves, remove

* 2 Peter i. 19. † Deut. xxxiv. 10.

remove the guilt nor prevent the chastisement of sin. The neglect or insult offered by a child, a brother, a friend, strikes deeper than the most violent outrage from a stranger, or an avowed enemy. The transgression of Moses at the waters of strife was thus aggravated, and he must die for it. O my God, enter not into judgment with me, whose crimes are heightened by every circumstance of aggravation—deliberation, presumption, filial ingratitude, in the face of solemn and repeated engagements. If Moses died the death, for once speaking unadvisedly with his lips, in the moment of passion; "if thou, Lord, art strict to mark iniquity, where shall I stand?" how shall I escape?

But is death a punishment to a good man? No. As in the death of Moses, therefore, we behold the justice and severity of God, so, in its consequences, we behold his goodness and loving-kindness. The evil is slight and temporary; the good is unspeakably great, and eternally permanent; exclusion from Canaan is admission into the kingdom of heaven; "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." Faith, indeed, redeems not from the power of the grave, but it dissipates all the horror of the tomb; transforms it into a resting place for the weary pilgrim; and converts the king of terrors into a minister of joy. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "The saying that is written, is come to pass, death is swallowed up of victory; mortality is swallowed up of life." "Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." We "know whom we have believed:" we believe in him who hath said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

History

Hiſtory of Moſes.

LECTURE IV.

NUMBERS XXXI. 1, 2.

And the Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying, Avenge the children of Iſrael of the Midianites: afterward ſhalt thou be gathered unto thy people.

THE intereſt which every reader of taſte and ſenſibility takes in the life and actions of Moſes is never permitted to flag, much leſs totally to ſink and expire. His infant cries, from the very firſt moment, awaken our ſympathy; and his departing words, at the age of a hundred and twenty years, continue to excite our eſteem and admiration. Whether employed as a miniſter of vengeance or of mercy, he inſpires affection or commands reſpect.

The love of life is not only natural and innocent, but important and neceſſary. We are inſtructed to guard, to preſerve, to prolong it, at once by the conſtitution and frame of our nature, and by manifold examples of the higheſt authority. And while Providence permits the farther extenſion of it, the reaſons and end of that extenſion are obviouſly manifeſt. Not a ſingle hour is added to the life of any one, merely to make up ſuch a quantity of time. No, every moment is deſtined to its peculiar purpoſe, paſſes to account, calls to its proper uſe and employment.

To

To dream of premature retirement from the exerciſe of our faculties and functions, of mere exiſtence without employment, is an attempt to defeat the intention of the Creator in ſending us into the world; is a degradation and perverſion of the powers of the human mind; is to be dead while we live. The inquiry of a well regulated ſpirit, to the laſt, is, "Lord, what wouldſt thou have me do?" While any of my powers remain, however blunted, however impaired, to whom ſhall I dedicate the poor remains? Enfeebled, exhauſted as I am, is there no one reſpect in which I can yet glorify God, or be uſeful to my fellow creatures?" And, to the laſt, the great Supporter of life, the Ruler of the world, has ſome command to give, ſome labour to be performed, ſome exerciſe of the hand, the head, or the heart to enjoin, ſome purpoſe of juſtice or of love to accompliſh.

Moſes has received warning to depart, but the hour of releaſe is not yet come. And though his offence at the waters of Meribah muſt be puniſhed with death, the tranquillity of his mind is not thereby diſcompoſed, nor his intercourſe with Heaven interrupted, nor his zeal in performing the duties of his ſtation abated. The God whom he had ſo long and faithfully ſerved, continues to converſe with him as a man with his friend, communicates to him his deſigns, and employs him in the execution. Our lives too are forfeited; the ſentence of death is upon us; under a reſpite of unknown, uncertain duration, our days are paſſing away. Improved ever ſo well, they cannot indeed redeem from the grave, nor alter the immutable decree; but their improvement may alleviate the bitterneſs of death, and pluck out the ſting. The inevitable courſe of nature, and the righteous deciſions of a holy law, deſtroy not the ſacred communications which ſubſiſt between a merciful God and a gracious ſpirit. To receive a command from an offended father, after judgment has been pronounced, partakes of the nature of a pardon; and it is no ſlender conſolation, even under

der the ſtroke of juſtice, to reflect that paternal affection was pleaſed to regard and accept future obedience and ſubmiſſion, if not as an atonement for offence, at leaſt as a mark of contrition for having tranſgreſſed. As if, therefore, we could wipe out the memory of the paſt; as if perſevering labours of gratitude and love could purchaſe our releaſe; as if death were to be prevented, diſarmed or deſtroyed, by the efforts of the paſſing moment, let us awake and ariſe to the knowledge, the ſtudy and the practice of our heavenly Father's will.

The ſervice preſcribed to Moſes on this occaſion was the execution of juſtice on a nation of offenders. The nature of the offence has been hinted at in a former Lecture; and we may form a judgment of its enormity, from the vengeance which purſued it. The ſtate of Midian, at the period in queſtion, exhibits the laſt ſtage of moral depravity—a corrupted people carrying on a temporary political deſign, by means the moſt ſcandalous and diſhonourable—the deareſt and moſt delicate intereſts of human nature vilely ſacrificed to its worſt and moſt diſgraceful propenſities—huſbands countenancing the proſtitution of their wives, and parents that of their daughters, in order to gratify ambition, avarice or revenge. A nation of ſuch a character is neceſſarily haſtening to utter deſtruction, without fire from heaven, or the ſword of a foreign enemy. But what vice was accelerating by its own native energy, Providence haſtens to an iſſue by a ſpecial interpoſition, and "the Lord makes himſelf known by the judgment which he executes."

The force which it was thought proper to employ for the extermination of this debauched race, is indication ſufficient how low its character was rated. Immerſed in ſenſuality, enervated by luxury, a handful of men was deemed enough to deſtroy them. A thouſand out of every tribe of Iſrael, twelve thouſand men in all, Moſes conſiders as fully competent to the execution

execution of this enterprize; and the event fully justified the eſtimate he had made. It is likewiſe remarkable, that he neither commands in this expedition, in perſon, nor commits the conduct of it to Joſhua, or any other of military profeſſion; but to "Phineas, the ſon of Eleazar the prieſt," furniſhed "with the holy inſtruments, and the trumpets to blow," in his hand." We have here, therefore, the idea of a ſolemn public execution, rather than of regular war. No reſiſtance is made, no blood but that of the criminals is ſhed; they dare not meet in the field thoſe whom in the ſecret chambers they could enſnare. In vain their hoary adviſer Balaam, urges them to feats of arms, and ſets them an example of courage; ſupported by five kings and their armies, he falls together with them, by the ſword of Iſrael, an awful monument, how certainly, however ſlowly, eternal juſtice overtakes the ſinner!

The immenſe booty which this eaſy victory tranſferred to the Iſraelites, is a farther demonſtration of the feebleneſs and diſſolution of their unwarlike enemy. They had wealth without being rich, luxury without enjoyment, policy without wiſdom, kingly power without government, and zeal for religion without an object of worſhip. Conquered the moment they are attacked, having no reſource in public or private virtue; men loſt to a ſenſe of what conſtitutes true female dignity, women precipitating that corruption of which they were the miſerable victims —they hold up to mankind a fearful but inſtructive example of the native, neceſſary, inevitable conſequences of vice. Up to ſimilar cauſes the downfal of ſtill greater ſtates may be traced; and if ſin be the ruin of any kingdom, what individual offender ſhall dare to flatter himſelf with the hope of eſcaping the righteous judgment of God?

The ſeverity with which judgment was executed on the Midianites, helps farther to unfold their character. An effeminate, luxurious people, generally excites

excites contempt at moſt; but here a holy and juſt indignation is kindled. Heaven itſelf is up in arms againſt a degenerate race; and Moſes, the meekeſt of men, accuſes the exterminators of the whole race of Midian of weak and exceſſive lenity. How is this to be accounted for? It will be found on inquiry, that in a very diſſolute ſtate of ſociety, vices of the moſt odious and atrocious kind are neceſſarily blended with others leſs offenſive. The love of pleaſure is the predominant character; but in order to feed and ſupport that paſſion, arts the moſt criminal and deteſtable muſt be employed. Injuſtice, violence, perjury and murder follow in the train of luſt. The moral principle is deſtroyed: all ſenſe of ſhame is loſt. The general depravity keeps every individual tranſgreſſor in countenance. Appearances are no longer attended to or kept up. Men glory in their ſhame. The very offices of religion are perverted into inſtruments of debauchery. Such, apparently, was the ſtate of Midian at the period under review; ſuch was that of Iſrael during the government and prieſthood of Eli; and ſuch was that of the Aſſyrian and Roman empires immediately previous to their ſubverſion. And in ſuch a ſtate, is it any wonder to ſee heaven and earth combined to root out and overthrow—a holy and righteous God employing the miniſtration of the gentleſt of mankind to cut off the name and memory of ſuch a people from the earth? When puniſhment ſo ſignal is inflicted, we may ſafely infer, that the guilt which provoked it from ſuch hands was enormous.

On reviewing the little army of Iſrael, after the victory, a fact turns up unequalled in the hiſtory of mankind—not ſo much as one of the twelve thouſand has fallen in battle: and that in attacking and deſtroying a nation ſo populous as to contain thirty-two thouſand females of a particular deſcription.* The hand of God was clearly viſible in this, and thankfully acknowledged. The ſuperfluous ornaments which

* Numb. xxxi. 35.

which lately publiſhed the ſhame of Midian, now proclaim the piety and gratitude of Iſrael; and become part of the ſacred treaſury of the tabernacle. Every creature of God is good in itſelf, and intended to do good. Uſe the world ſo as not to abuſe it, and the Creator is glorified. Every day added to our life is as much a miracle of mercy, as the preſervation of every individual of the twelve thouſand in the day of battle. Let our gratitude declare itſelf in an habitual devotedneſs of heart and life, to the God of our life, and the length of our days; let us preſent our "bodies a living ſacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reaſonable ſervice: and be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." *

In the puniſhment inflicted on Midian, we behold a righteous God proſecuting an injury done to Iſrael, as an inſult offered to himſelf. And indeed every offence againſt ſociety is a direct attack of the divine authority, which has fenced the perſon, the fame and the virtue of our neighbour on every ſide, againſt all the aſſaults, whether of violence or deceit. The character and conduct, in connexion with the untimely end of the arch-ſeducer Balaam, are an awful and inſtructive inſtance of the juſtice of God in making ſignal guilt its own avenger, and furniſh a ſtriking illuſtration of the obſervations made by the pſalmiſt and his wiſe ſon: "Behold he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived miſchief, and brought forth falſehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His miſchief ſhall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing ſhall come down upon his own pate. I will praiſe the Lord according to his righteouſneſs; and will ſing praiſe to the name of the Lord moſt high." † "The heathen are ſunk down in the pit that they made, in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the

* Rom. xii. 1, 2. † Pſal. vii. 14—17.

the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands."* "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction: and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray."†

—In the faint resistance made by the Midianites to a force so small, we behold the native tendency of vice to enfeeble and enervate. Sunk in effeminacy and sloth, they are overcome as soon as attacked. Strong in cunning, they are destitute of true wisdom, and defective in valour. The foe that assaults, that conquers them, is within. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is bold as a lion." Addictedness to the pleasures of sense gradually, though insensibly, encroaches on all the nobler principles of our nature, undermines and subverts them. Every spring of the soul is relaxed through disuse; the bodily powers become languid, and the sluggish giant becomes an easy prey to the active and vigorous child. Exercise your faculties, and they will increase and improve; neglect them, and they will quickly fall into utter decay. Fear God, maintain "a conscience void of offence," and bid defiance to what earth and hell can do against you.

—In the free-will offering of these grateful Israelites for protection and deliverance in the day of battle, behold a laudable example of attention to the ways of Providence, and of thankful acknowledgment of them. Let friends, after the days of separation are at an end, after the hour of danger is past, reckon their numbers. Do they remain entire, not one missing, is no allay mingled with the joy of re-union? It was the hand of God that supported; he "gave his angels charge concerning you." "He covered you with his feathers; his truth was your shield and buckler; no evil befel you, no plague came nigh your dwelling."

* Psal. ix. 15, 16. † Prov. v. 21—23.

ing." "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; offer unto him thankſgiving, honour him with your ſubſtance;" preſent "the calves of your lips," the devotedneſs of your hearts, the obedience of your lives.

—Does the puniſhment of this people appear to any rigorous and exceſſive? Let them conſider that they are very incompetent judges of God's moral government; that they ſee but a few ſcattered fragments of the vaſt ſcheme of Providence; that creatures themſelves ignorant, weak and criminal, muſt be much diſqualified to "hold the balance and the rod;" that every tranſgreſſion of the divine law merits death; that "fools" only "make a mock at ſin." Let the whole earth tremble before Him "who will by no means clear the guilty:" who has denounced "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh againſt every ſoul of man that doth evil," while to the humble and contrite in heart, he proclaims his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth; keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin;"* "viſiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the *third* and *fourth* generation of them who hate him; but ſhewing mercy to *thouſands* of them that love him and keep his commandments."†

—In the leader and commander of Iſrael behold, once more, a man exalted far above all temporary, all ſelfiſh concerns; occupied only with the intereſts of truth and juſtice, the duties of his ſtation, the proſperity of his charge, the glory of Him who had conferred it upon him. In this laſt object his whole ſoul is abſorbed. He walks already on air, and beholds the world under his feet; but forgets not that he is yet in it, and that in every ſtate, and at every period of exiſtence, a rational being may promote, and ought to

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. † Exod. xx. 5, 6.

to be ſtudying how he may beſt promote, the honour of his Creator, by adminiſtering juſtice, or extending mercy to his fellow-creatures. Conſider him well; and, in your ſphere, with the means and ability you enjoy, go and do likewiſe—and God grant us all wiſdom to know and do what is well-pleaſing in his ſight.

Hiſtory of Moſes.

LECTURE V.

NUMBERS XXXV. 9—15.

And the Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying, Speak unto the children of Iſrael, and ſay unto them, When ye be come over Jordan, into the land of Canaan, then ye ſhall appoint you cities, to be cities of refuge for you; that the ſlayer may flee thither which killeth any perſon at unawares. And they ſhall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manſlayer die not, until he ſtand before the congregation in judgment. And of theſe cities which ye ſhall give, ſix cities ſhall ye have for refuge. Ye ſhall give three cities on this ſide Jordan, and three cities ſhall ye give in the land of Canaan, which ſhall be cities of refuge. Theſe ſix cities ſhall be a refuge, both for the children of Iſrael, and for the ſtranger, and for the ſojourner among them; that every one that killeth any perſon unawares may flee thither.

HUMAN laws are generally the reſult of experience, not the proviſion of foreſight. Occaſion dictates the encouragement to be given, the reſtraint to be impoſed, the puniſhment to be inflicted. The multiplication of new and extraordinary caſes, muſt of courſe ſwell the ſtatute book; through change of circumſtances ſome inſtitutes muſt ſink into diſuſe and oblivion, and others riſe into exiſtence and force. Hence the variety, the oppoſition, the contradiction of different

different codes of law, not only in different countries, but in the ſame country at different periods.

There are, at the ſame time, certain general and fixed principles of law applicable to every ſtate of ſociety; which, founded in eternal, unchangeable truth and juſtice, are in perpetual force, and of univerſal obligation. Diveſted of every thing arbitrary, local and temporary, they addreſs themſelves to the underſtanding and conſcience of every man, and irreſiſtibly carry conviction with them. The genius, character and progreſs of any people, a ſagacious obſerver will be able to trace, with tolerable accuracy, in their legiſlation, in their inſtitutions, political and religious; for thoſe of a moral tendency never vary. It is eaſy to diſcern in the ſpirit of the laws, what is the ſpirit of the nation; to diſcern whether liberty or deſpotiſm, moderation or tyranny is predominant.

But the conſtitution of the commonwealth of Iſrael poſſeſſes diſtinctive features. It was formed by Divine Wiſdom long before it had a local reſidence wherein to act. The laws by which Canaan was to be governed, were enacted in the wilderneſs. Preſcience made proviſion for caſes which could not as yet have ariſen. Republican equality was blended with abſolute unlimited theocracy; a liberty and a ſovereignty eſtabliſhed in perfect harmony, and yet both to their utmoſt extent. The Levitical part of the conſtitution was adapted to this ſtate of things. The prieſthood, in reſpect of property and poſſeſſion, was reduced below the level of their brethren; while by their office and employments, the homage paid and the proviſion made for them, they were raiſed above their fellows. They were appointed to miniſter at the altar of God; and it was his will, and it was reaſonable, that they ſhould live by it.

One of the laſt public ſervices in which Moſes was employed, is the ſettlement of this branch of the political economy—the eſtabliſhment of religion, without which no ſtate can long exiſt; and the appointment

of a moderate, but certain and steady provision for its ministers.

Forty and eight cities, in all, with their suburbs, and an extent of territory around every one, not exceeding two thousand cubits, in all directions, were to be set apart for the tribe of Levi, and distributed by lot. As the lot was specially ordered by Divine Providence, the dispersion of this tribe over the whole land, there is good reason to believe, God in wisdom overruled favourably to the exercise of their sacred function. Of their other privileges and immunities, we are not now led to treat. The words we have read limit our attention to an institution, in many respects singular, and unexampled in the history of mankind—the appointment of six of the Levitical cities, as places of refuge for the unintentional, and therefore less criminal manslayer. Respecting this institution, and its reason and design, the following particulars recommend themselves to our notice.

The provision here made refers to a case of singular importance to society; on which indeed the very being of society depends—the security of human life against violence. To take away the life of another is the most atrocious offence which man can commit against man. The laws of every well-regulated community have accordingly marked it as the object of just vengeance, saying, in the language of the supreme Legislator, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." But into the commission of this offence, as of every other, circumstances of aggravation or alleviation may enter; and every wise legislator will take these into consideration; adapting the degree of punishment to the degree of criminality, distinguishing the action, as connected with, or separated from the intention. To the wilful and deliberate murderer no place was to serve as a sanctuary; to him the altar itself was to afford no protection. But a man may deprive his neighbour of life without incurring the guilt of murder; and it must be imputed to

to him as a calamity, not a crime. To meet ſuch a caſe, the proviſion in queſtion was made; and a refuge was provided for both the citizen and the ſtranger who might "unawares," without malice or intention, occaſion the death of another.

This refuge, however, was not wholly unreſtricted, but ſubject to a variety of regulations, all calculated powerfully to impreſs on the minds of the people, an awful ſenſe of the value put on the life of man by the great Legiſlator: and to ſerve as a caution not only againſt deliberate violence, but even againſt careleſsneſs and inattention, where the life of another was concerned. Blood lies heavily, as it ought, on the head of him who ſheddeth it, however innocently; and the conſciouſneſs of it will ever be felt as a ſevere puniſhment by a ſenſible heart, though no judge ariſe to avenge it. But puniſhment to a certain degree was inflicted on the manſlayer, by the very ſtatute which appointed the refuge; and to the uneaſy reflections ariſing from having been the unwilling inſtrument of a man's death, were ſuperadded alarming apprehenſions and painful reſtraints.

The firſt regulation limited the number of theſe cities to ſix, for the whole commonwealth of Iſrael. Hence, an eſcape to a place of refuge muſt, in many inſtances, have been effected through much danger, exertion and labour; and the unhappy fugitive muſt frequently have felt all the bitterneſs of death in his ſolicitude to flee from it. Thus, while the finger of mercy pointed to the ſtrong hold of ſafety, the voice of juſtice exclaimed, "Flee for thy life, look not behind thee, leſt thou periſh; behold the avenger of blood is at thy heels."

But that the danger, and the anxiety reſulting from it, might be diminiſhed as far as the limited number of the cities would admit, it was determined by the lot that theſe ſhould be diſperſed at the moſt commodious diſtances, over the country; and it was expreſſly provided that three of them ſhould be on each ſide the

the Jordan, in order to facilitate and secure escape at the seasons when that river overflowed its banks, and rendered a passage tedious, difficult or impracticable. In the same view, it has been affirmed, and seems probable, that the roads which led to these cities were formed and maintained at the public expense, and that their breadth was very considerable: that every obstruction was removed out of the way, bridges were thrown over interposing streams, and when roads happened to cross or separate, an index, inscribed with the word *Refuge*, pointed out the right course. And thus an institution humane in its design, was rendered more so, by the manner in which it was observed.

But again—the city was, in the first instance, to serve only as a temporary refuge, and afforded shelter only till inquiry was made into the fact, and judgment was solemnly given between the manslayer and the avenger of blood, upon evidence adduced. If criminal intention was proved, there was no remedy, blood demanded blood, the prisoner must be delivered up to the hands of justice. If otherwise, public protection was granted, and he was restored to his refuge. The ordinance having it in view not to prevent and suppress the truth, but to bring it openly and fully to light.

The innocence of the prosecuted party having been made clearly to appear, he was restored indeed to his refuge, but it became, at the same time, his prison. Exiled from his native possession, and from all that rendered it dear; doomed to live among strangers, to subsist on their bounty, perhaps to feel their unkindness or neglect, he must drag out a comfortless existence, to an unknown, uncertain period; or stir abroad under constant apprehension and hazard of his life. And confinement is still confinement, though in a place of safety, a city of refuge: and ignorance and uncertainty respecting the termination of our misery, are bitter ingredients in the cup of affliction. "It may

may outlaſt life," ſad thought! "or conſume the beſt and moſt valuable portion of my days. Unhappy that I am, to have introduced mourning into my neighbour's family, and deſolated my own. Though I feel not the pangs of remorſe, my heart is torn with thoſe of regret; and blood, though ſhed without a crime, is a burden too heavy for me to bear."

The laſt regulation on record reſpecting this ſubject, was a permiſſion to the hapleſs manſlayer to "return into the land of his poſſeſſion," on the death of the high-prieſt. The reaſon of this ordinance does not appear; but it contains a circumſtance very affecting to the priſoner himſelf, and affecting to all Iſrael. His releaſe from confinement could be purchaſed only by death, the death of another; and that not of an ordinary citizen, but of the moſt dignified and reſpectable character in the republic. The weight of blood innocently ſhed, was at length to be removed; but how? Not by the demiſe of him who ſhed it, but of "the high-prieſt which ſhould be in thoſe days." And may we not ſuppoſe a refugee of ſenſibility looking forward to this event with the mixed emotions of hope and ſorrow? The very cauſe of his enlargement makes it to partake of the nature of a puniſhment. He dare hardly wiſh for liberty, for it involved guilt deeper than what already lay upon his head; deliberate deviſing the death of his neighbour, and taking pleaſure in it.

Now, if guiltleſs homicide ſubjected the perpetrator of it to ſuch accumulated danger, anxiety and diſtreſs, how atrocious in the ſight of God muſt wilful murder be? And how ſacred, in the ſight of man, ought to be the life of his brother, and every thing relating to its preſervation and comfort, his health, his peace, his reputation? To attack him in any of theſe reſpects, is to level a blow at his head, or, where he feels more ſenſibly ſtill, at his heart.

Let us review this laſt of the Moſaic inſtitutions, and mark its reference to a clearer and more explicit diſpenſation:

penſation: for it too is evidently "a ſhadow of good things to come."

—The flying "manſlayer" is an affecting repreſentation of what every man is by nature and by wicked works; an unhappy creature, who has offended againſt his brother, violated the laws of ſociety, broken his own peace of mind, and trampled on the divine authority, not only accidentally and unintentionally, but deliberately, preſumptuouſly. His conſcience, "like the troubled ſea," cannot reſt. What he feels is dreadful, what he fears is infinitely worſe. With trembling Cain, he apprehends that every one who meeteth him will ſlay him; his multiplied crimes cry out of the ground for vengeance upon his head—while eternal, inflexible juſtice, like "the avenger of blood," purſues him to the death. To flee from, or endure the wrath of an offended God, is equally impoſſible. All nature is up in arms againſt him; he is become a terror to himſelf; the king of terrors aims his fatal dart, and hell follows after.

—The "refuge" provided by this ſtatute for the unhappy man who had deſtroyed his brother, and troubled his own ſoul, prefigures the remedy preſcribed by infinite wiſdom for the recovery of a loſt, periſhing world—that diſpenſation of Divine Providence in which "mercy and truth are met together, righteouſneſs and peace have kiſſed each other." Fear not, guilty creature, there is hope concerning thee: thou ſhalt not die. The God whom thou haſt offended, even he, "hath found out a ranſom;" he hath "laid help on One who is mighty to ſave, even to the uttermoſt, them who come unto God through him." Ceaſe from the anxious inquiry, "Who ſhall aſcend into heaven, to bring Chriſt down from above? Who ſhall deſcend into the deep, to bring up Chriſt again from the dead?" "The word is nigh thee," and in this word the Lord "brings near his righteouſneſs," and his ſalvation. The name of JEHOVAH is as a ſtrong tower, whoſe runneth into it is ſafe. Prophets, apoſtles,

apoſtles, evangeliſts, with one accord, point to the ſanctuary, ſaying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." "Turn ye to the ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope." Here is "an high way"—"the way-faring men, though fools, ſhall not err therein." The Saviour himſelf proclaims, "Look to me, and be ſaved." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out."

—The very act of flying from "the avenger of blood," argued a conſciouſneſs of criminality, and an apprehenſion of danger; and the courſe directed to a city of refuge, indicated a knowledge of its appointment, and of the privileges pertaining to it. In this we behold the character of the convinced, penitent ſinner, condemned of his own conſcience, ſtripped of every plea of ſelf-righteouſneſs, alarmed with the terrors of "the wrath to come," encouraged by the declarations of the mercy of God in Chriſt, apprehending "ſalvation in no other," perceiving no way to eſcape but this, he flees "for refuge to lay hold of the hope ſet before him," even to "Him who is mighty to ſave;" to that "blood which ſpeaketh better things than the blood of Abel;" to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the ſin of the world;" ſaying, in the words of the pſalmiſt, "O Lord, thou art my refuge; return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." "In Jehovah alone have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength;" "he alſo is become my ſalvation."

The ſafety of the manſlayer depended, not on having arrived at, but on remaining in the city of his refuge. To leave it prematurely was as fatal as to be overtaken on the way that led to it. The grace of the goſpel, in like manner, is extended, not to him who, convinced of ſin, and trembling with apprehenſion of judgment to come, has fled for refuge, to the great Propitiation for ſin, but to him who abideth in Chriſt. As there is a "believing to the ſaving of the ſoul;" ſo there is a "drawing back unto perdition:"

and

and "no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Hence the solemn injunction and warning of Christ himself, "Abide in me, and I in you—if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." The great Apostle and High-Priest of our profession lives forever; there is therefore "no more going out." "In returning and rest shall we be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength."

—The sanctuary provided and opened, equally for the distressed Israelite and "the stranger," is a happy prefiguration of the indiscriminating mercy, the unlimited extension of the gospel salvation. "In Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." He "came and preached peace to you which were far off, and to them that were nigh; and through him, we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father." The gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." It announces "glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." "For there is no respect of persons with God." Blessed dispensation, which hath abolished all invidious distinctions! "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all!" Who art thou then, O man, who "judgest thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" He is a man like thyself, a criminal as thou art; for him also Christ died, and for his admission, as for thine, the door of mercy stands open, the city of refuge strengthens its walls, expands its gates.

I conclude

I conclude with ſuggeſting a few hints, which will ſerve to evince the glorious ſuperiority of the object prefigured, over the figure; of "the very image of the things," above "the ſhadow of good things to come." The inſtitution under review was a proviſion for one particular ſpecies of offence and diſtreſs, and for a caſe which could occur but in rarer inſtances. Indeed the whole hiſtory of Iſrael furniſhes not a ſingle one. But the proviſions of the "better covenant —eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes," extend to every ſpecies, and to every inſtance of guilt and miſery. They are made not only for the heedleſs and the unfortunate, the weak and the helpleſs, but for the ſtout-hearted and preſumptuous, for deliberate offenders and backſliding children, for the very chief of ſinners. Whatever, O man, be thy peculiar "weight, and the ſin that doth more eaſily beſet thee;" whatever "the plague of thine heart," or the error of thy life, behold "help laid for thee on One mighty to ſave." "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the ſin of the world." Hear, and accept his kind invitation, "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt." "Look to me, and be ſaved, all the ends of the earth." "Him that cometh I will in no wiſe caſt out." The cities of Iſrael ſerved as a temporary reprieve from a ſentence of death, which, though the hand of the "avenger" was reſtrained, the hand of nature was ſpeedily to execute. The manſlayer might be overtaken by it, in the very city of his refuge. But the believer's ſecurity under the goſpel never fails, never terminates. He is "paſſed from death unto life;" he "ſhall never periſh." "There is no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus." "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again." "I give unto them eternal life, and they ſhall never periſh, neither ſhall any pluck them out of my hand: my Father which gave them me is greater

greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Under the law, the death of the high-priest, the final era of release to the manslayer, was an event entirely casual, often distant, always uncertain. Under the gospel, that death, which is the sinner's deliverance, the soul's ransom, is an event forever present, perpetually producing its effect. Christ, "by one offering, hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."

"We ought, therefore, to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip." For if the intentional murderer was to be dragged from God's altar, to suffer the punishment of his crime; and if the manslayer, who despised and neglected his refuge, fell a just sacrifice to the resentment of "the avenger of blood," and to his own presumption and neglect of the merciful ordinance of God; "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" "For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."† "Behold, now is the

* Heb. x. 28, 29. 26, 27. 31. † Isai. lv. 6, 7.

the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."* "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings; behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel."†

* 2 Cor. vi. 2. † Jer. iii. 22, 23.

History

History of Moſes.

LECTURE VI.

DEUTERONOMY i. 3.

And it came to paſs in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the firſt day of the month, that Moſes ſpake unto the children of Iſrael, according unto all that the Lord had given him in commandment unto them.

"Where is that thrift, that avarice of time,
O glorious avarice! thought of death inſpires?"

YOUNG.

BEHOLD this honourable thrift, this glorious avarice, exemplified in that moſt amiable and excellent of mankind, Moſes, the man of God, who has condeſcended to be ſo long our inſtructor and our guide. He is now in the laſt month of his earthly exiſtence; he is "ready to be offered up; the time of his departure is at hand;" and an illuſtrious inſtance his laſt days exhibits of how much may be done in a little time. Within the compaſs of that month, that little month, all the words of this book were ſpoken in the ears of all Iſrael, and were committed to writing. The decree, the irreverſible decree had gone forth, he knew that he muſt die; he therefore ſets himſelf to redeem the time, and ſeeing his days are now few, not one of them ſhall be ſpent in vain.

The

The tide which carried him along to the world of ſpirits, is haſtening to finiſh our courſe, to add us to the number of thoſe who were, but are no more. Another month, a little month, muſt cloſe our review of the life and writings of Moſes. A ſtill ſhorter period may cloſe our worldly career; and when we part, it is to meet no more, till "the dead, ſmall and great, ſtand before God." Let us then ſeize the moments as they fly, and redeem our time. Let us drink into the ſpirit of Moſes, and learn of him how to live, and how to die.

We ſee here a man living cheerfully, living uſefully to the laſt. Two different and indeed oppoſite feelings are apt to betray men into the ſame practical error, that of miſſpending their time, and neglecting their opportunities—the confidence of living long on the one hand—the near proſpect of death on the other. What we imagine it is in our power to do when we pleaſe, we are in great danger of never doing at all; and we feel the remorſe of occaſion forever loſt, ere we are well awake from the dream of a ſeaſon continually at our diſpoſal; and it is but too common, when thus overtaken, diſconcerted and confuſed, to give up our work in deſpair. Having much to do, and the time being ſhort, we ſit down, and lament our folly, and do nothing. Preſumption betrays us to-day, diffidence and deſpondency deſtroy us to-morrow.

But in the laſt weeks of Moſes's life we diſcover nothing of the indecent hurry of a man conſcious of neglect, and eager to repair it. He neither runs nor loiters; but walks with the ſteadineſs and dignity of one whoſe ſtrength is as his day; who has a labour preſcribed, and ability to perform it. In his youth we have a pattern of generoſity, and public ſpirit, and courage, and greatneſs of mind; in his manhood, of wiſdom, of diligence, of perſeverance, of fidelity; and now in his old age, of calmneſs, of devotion, of ſuperiority to the world, of heavenly mindedneſs.

Obſerve

Observe the excellency of his spirit, at this period, a little more particularly. He set a proper value upon life. He desired its continuance, with the feelings natural to a man, he prized it as the gift of God, as the precious season of acting for God, of observing and improving the ways of his providence, of doing good to men, of preparation for eternity. He prayed for its prolongation, without fearing its end; and he thereby reproves that rashness which exposes life to unnecessary danger, that intemperance which wastes and shortens, that indolence and listlessness which dissipate it; and that vice and impiety which clothe death with terror.

In Moses we have a bright example of genuine patriotism. That most respectable quality appeared in him early, and shone most conspicuously at the last. "When he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter: choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."* For Israel's sake he was willing to encounter a thousand dangers, to endure a thousand hardships. For them he braved the wrath of a king, sacrificed his ease, consented to be blotted out of God's book. For them he laboured, fasted, prayed; in their service was his life spent, and his dying breath was poured out in pronouncing blessings upon them. If it went well with Israel, no matter what became of himself. Their unkindness and ingratitude excited no resentment in his breast. When they rebelled he was grieved, when they were threatened he trembled, when they suffered he bled, when they were healed he rejoiced. O how his temper and conduct reprove that pride, which perpetually aims at aggrandizing itself, which must have every thing bend and yield to it, which is ready to sacrifice thousands to its own humour or advantage; that selfishness which grasps all, sets every thing to sale, and refuses to be ashamed.

The

* Heb. xi. 24, 25.

The generoſity and diſintereſtedneſs of Moſes eminently adorned the cloſe of his life. He was a father, and had all the feelings of that tender relation. It was natural for him to wiſh and expect that his ſons ſhould be diſtinguiſhed after his death, ſhould be the heirs of his honour, ſhould ſucceed to his authority. An ordinary man would have been diſpoſed to employ the power which he poſſeſſed to build up, to enrich, to ennoble his own family: but the will of God was declared. Joſhua was the choice of Heaven; Joſhua his ſervant, one of another family, another tribe. In the appointment Moſes rejoices, he adopts Joſhua as his ſon, as his aſſociate; ſees him riſe with complacency, puts his honour upon him: and thereby expoſes to ſhame that littleneſs of ſoul which enviouſly repreſſes riſing merit, that vice of age which can diſcern nothing wiſe and good in the young; that tenaciouſneſs of power which would communicate no advantage with another.

What anxiety does the good man diſcover that Iſrael ſhould act wiſely, and go on proſperouſly after his death! There is no end to his admonitions and inſtructions. By word, by writing, by inſinuation, by authority, in the ſpirit of meekneſs, of love, of parental care, he cautions, he warns, he remonſtrates. Men naturally love to be miſſed, to be inquired after, to be longed for; but it was the delight of Moſes in his departing moments, that his place was already ſupplied, that the congregation would not miſs their leader, that Joſhua ſhould happily accompliſh what he had happily begun. Selfiſh men enjoy the proſpect of the diſorder and miſchief which their departure may occaſion. Moſes foreſaw the revolt of Iſrael after his deceaſe, and it was the grief and bitterneſs of his heart.

In Moſes we have an inſtructive inſtance of that continuance in well-doing, that perſeverance unto the end, which finds a duty for every day, for every hour; which accounts nothing done ſo long as any thing remains to be done, which cheerfully ſpends and is

spent for the service of God, and the good of mankind. Age is ready to put in its claim, when honour is expected, and advantage to be reaped; and is as ready to plead its exemption when service is required, danger is to be encountered, and hardship undergone. But while Moses discovers the utmost readiness to share with another the emolument and the respect of his office, the trouble and fatigue of it he with equal cheerfulness undertakes and supports to the very last.

In the whole of his temper and conduct, we have an example which at once admonishes, reproves and encourages us. May we not, after considering the noble and excellent spirit he discovered through the course and at the close of life, contemplate the probable state of his mind in reviewing the past, and surveying the prospect before him: both affording unspeakable comfort, but neither wholly exempted from pain.

Pleasant it must have been to reflect, 1. On his miraculous preservation in infancy. "To what dangers was I then exposed? Doomed to perish by the sword from my mother's womb. Concealed by fond parents for three months at the peril of their life, as well as my own. Committed at length to the merciless stream, a prey to manifold death—the roaring tide, hunger, the monsters of the river, contending which should destroy me. But I was precious in the sight of God. No plague came nigh me; no evil befel me. The daughter of the tyrant saved me from the rage of the tyrant. The house of Pharaoh became my sanctuary. The munificence of a princess recompensed the offices of maternal tenderness. I knew not then to whom I was indebted for protection, from what source my comforts flowed: let age and consciousness acknowledge with wonder and gratitude the benefits conferred on infant helplessness and infirmity; let my dying breath utter his praise, who preserved me from perishing as soon as I began to breathe."

2. May

2. May we not suppose the holy man of God, by an easy transition, passing on to meditate on deliverance from still greater danger, danger that threatened his moral life—the snares of a court? "Flattered and caressed as *the son of Pharaoh's daughter*, brought up in *all the learning of the Egyptians*, having all *the treasures in Egypt* at my command, at an age when the passions, *which war against the soul*, are all afloat—what risk did I run of forgetting myself, of forgetting my people, of forgetting my God? But the grace of the Most High prevented me. I *endured as seeing him who is invisible*. I *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*. I was not ashamed to be known for a son of Israel. I *went out to see the burdens* of my brethren, I had compassion on them, and comforted them; *not fearing the wrath of a king*, I *smote him that did the wrong*, and saved the oppressed. I *chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*. I *esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*. To God I committed myself; and my virtue, my religion, my honour, my inward peace were preserved."

3. What satisfaction must it have yielded Moses in reviewing his life, to reflect on his having been made the honoured instrument, in the hand of Providence, for effecting the deliverance of an oppressed people? "I found Israel labouring, groaning, expiring in the furnace. I *beheld the tears of them that were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter*. Their cry reached heaven. He who made them had mercy upon them. He was pleased to choose me out of all the myriads of Israel, to bring them *out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*. He taught my stammering tongue to speak plainly. He said to my *fearful heart, Be strong*. He armed me with his potent rod; and subjected the powers of nature to my command. The oppressor was crushed in his turn, and the oppressed went out free, full and triumphant.

And to me, even unto me, it was given to conduct this great, difficult, dangerous, glorious enterprise; and Heaven crowned it with success."

4. How pleasing to reflect that the Spirit of God had employed him to communicate so much valuable knowledge to mankind! "To me was this grace given, to trace nature up to its source; to ascend from son to father, up to the general parent of the human race; to rescue from oblivion the ages beyond the flood, and to rescue departed worth from the darkness of the grave. By me these venerable men, though dead, speak and instruct the world. By me the being and perfections, the works and ways, the laws and designs of the great Supreme stand unfolded; the plan and progress of his providence, the system of nature, the dispensation of grace. To my writings shall ages and generations resort for the knowledge of events past, and for the promises and predictions of greater events yet to come. *The Spirit of the* LORD *spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*, and *the word of the* LORD *endureth forever.*"

5. What delight must it have afforded, in reviewing the past, to revive the memory of communion with God, of exalted intercourse with the Father of spirits! "Blessed retirement from the noise of the world and the strife of tongues; solitude infinitely more delicious than all society! Wilderness of Horeb, school of wisdom, scene of calm and unmixed joy, in thee I learned to commune with my own heart, forgot the sensual, unsatisfying delights of Egypt, observed the glories of nature, contemplated the wonders of providence, enjoyed the visions of the Almighty! Happy days, when I tended the flocks of Jethro, obeyed the dictates of inspiration, and conversed with my heavenly Father, as a man with his friend! I saw him in flaming yet unconsuming fire, I heard his voice from the midst of the burning bush, my feet stood upon holy ground. And thou, sacred summit of Sinai, where the Most High imparted to me the counsels of his

his will; ſupernaturally ſuſtained the feeble, mortal frame; irradiated my ſoul with the communications of his love, and my countenance with beams of light; how can I forget thee, and the forty hallowed days paſſed on thee, in converſe more ſublime than ever before fell to the lot of humanity! To thee, ſacred ſtructure, reared according to the pattern ſhewed me in the mount, to thee I look in rapturous recollection! Thou wert my refuge in the hour of danger. In thee the aſſurances of divine favour and ſupport, compenſated, extinguiſhed the unkindneſs of man. How often haſt thou been to me a heaven upon earth!"

—But a retroſpective view of life muſt have preſented to Moſes many objects painful and humiliating; and bitter recollections muſt have mingled themſelves with the ſweet. The repeated defections of a ſtiff-necked and gainſaying people, whom no kindneſs could melt, no threatenings deter, no promiſe animate, no calamity ſubdue: a people who had requited the care of Heaven with reiterated, unprovoked rebellions; and his own labours of love, with hatred, inſult and ingratitude. Painful it muſt have been to think, that he had ſurvived a whole people, endeared to him by every ſtrong, by every tender tie: that he had been gradually dying for forty years together, in a condemned, devoted race, which melted away before his eyes in the wilderneſs: that with his own hand he had ſtripped Aaron his brother of his pontifical garments, and cloſed his eyes. Painful to reflect on his own errors and imperfections—his criminal neglect of God's covenant, which had nearly coſt him his life: his ſinful delay and reluctance to accept the divine commiſſion appointing him the deliverer of Iſrael; the haſtineſs of his ſpirit in defacing the work of God, by daſhing the tables of the law to the ground, and breaking them in pieces; the impatience of his temper, the unadviſedneſs of his lips, the unguardedneſs of his conduct, at the waters of ſtrife, which drew down diſpleaſure on his head, and irreverſibly doomed

doomed it to death. This uneasy retrospect would naturally lead to prospects as uneasy and distressing—*The time of his departure is at hand;* the body must speedily be dissolved, and *the dust return to the earth as it was.* Against his admission Canaan is fenced as with a wall of fire, and a distant glimpse must supply the room of possession, and another must finish his work. Besides the natural horror of death, there was mingled in that bitter cup a particular sense of personal offence and fatherly displeasure as inflicting it. Israel too, he foresaw, would after his decease revolt more and more, and call down the judgments of Heaven, and forfeit the promised inheritance—and this was to him the bitterness of death.

But by what brighter prospects was this gloom relieved, and the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death illuminated! He saw the promise of God hastening to its accomplishment. The "land flowing with milk and honey" was fully in view. The time, the set time was now come; and what powers of nature could prevent the purpose of Heaven from taking effect? "O Lord, thou art faithful and true; *Do now as thou hast said.*" *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.* My master is dismissing me from painful service; I shall rest from my labours; I shall receive the crown. I am passing from the imperfect, interrupted communion of an earthly sanctuary, to the pure, exalted, uninterrupted, everlasting communications of the heavenly state. I shall *see God as he is.* I *shall be changed into the same image.* I shall *be ever with the Lord.* I shall shine in his likeness. I shall be added, united to the assembly of the faithful; to the venerable men of whom I wrote, to Abel the first martyr to the truth, to Enoch, who *walked with God*, to Noah, the *preacher of righteousness*, to Abraham, who *believed*, and *was called the friend of God*, to Joseph, whose bones are now at length to

to rest in the land of promise, to Aaron, my brother, by nature, by affection, in offence, in hope. With the natural eye I behold the fertile plains of an earthly Canaan: but by the eye of faith I descry *another country, that is an heavenly;* watered with the *pure river of the water of life*, where grow the trees of life, whose *leaves are for the healing of the nations:* where there is *no more death.* My brethren, *I die*, but *God will surely visit you. There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. The* LORD *thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken. In the* LORD *shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* In Abraham's seed *shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* Mortality is swallowed up of life; O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory."

—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

History

Hiſtory of Moſes.

LECTURE VII.

DEUTERONOMY xxxi. 1—3.

And Moſes went and ſpake theſe words unto all Iſrael. And he ſaid unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day: I can no more go out and come in: alſo the Lord hath ſaid unto me, Thou ſhalt not go over this Jordan. The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will deſtroy theſe nations from before thee, and thou ſhalt poſſeſs them: and Joſhua, he ſhall go over before thee, as the Lord hath ſaid.

THE laſt words and the laſt actions of eminent men are remembered, repeated, recorded with a mournful pleaſure. We liſten with peculiar attention to thoſe lips, which are to ſpeak to us no more: and the man, and the words, which we neglected, while there was a proſpect of their continuing longer with us, we prize, we cleave to, and wiſh to retain, when they are about to be taken away from us. Indeed we diſcover the value of nothing, till we are threatened with, or feel the want of it; and we awake to a ſenſe of the happineſs which we have poſſeſſed, by the bitter reflection that it is gone from us forever.

Farewel addreſſes ſerve to rouſe both the ſpeaker and the hearers. He is led to weigh well thoſe words which he is to have no future opportunity of altering

or

or amending. His eyes, his voice, his turn of thought, his expreſſion, all will be influenced by the ſolemnity of his ſituation; and what he feels, he will certainly communicate to others. Wherefore is not every addreſs conſidered in this light; as a laſt, farewel, dying ſpeech? It may be ſo in truth; and if it were known to be ſo, would our attention be ſo diſtracted, our ſpirit ſo careleſs; would our language be thus cold, our zeal thus languid? Attend, my dear friends, and fellow mortals. This is, beyond all controverſy, to ſome of us the laſt opportunity of the kind. The ſound of this voice ſhall never again meet all thoſe ears in one place. *It* may be forever ſilenced; each of *them* may be forever cloſed; and the ordinary tide of human affairs muſt certainly ſcatter, this night, perſons who are never more to re-aſſemble, till that day when the whole human race ſhall be gathered together in one great multitude.

We are come hither to ponder thy dying words, O Moſes, and to gird up our loins, and follow thee.

This whole book may be conſidered as a ſeries of powerful, pathetic and tender addreſſes, delivered at different times, within the compaſs of the laſt month of his life, by Moſes to Iſrael, in the near and certain proſpect of diſſolution. Art has attempted to divide it into ſo many ſeveral diſtinct heads, or branches, forming together a complete body of inſtruction, wonderfully adapted to the occaſion, and powerfully enforced upon the minds of the hearers by the death of their teacher, which immediately followed.

The firſt great branch, is a ſuccinct and animated hiſtorical detail of the conduct of the Divine Providence towards them and their fathers, during the laſt forty years, commencing with their departure out of Horeb, and containing an account of their ſucceſſive movements and encampings. A recapitulation of the recent events of their own lives, and of what had befallen their immediate predeceſſors, was obviouſly calculated to excite emotions ſuitable to their preſent condition.

condition. A complete generation of men had melted away before their eyes under the divine diſpleaſure! Every removal, every encampment was marked by the death of multitudes, who had fallen not by the ſword of the enemy, but were cut off by the flaming ſword of divine juſtice, and were not ſuffered to enter into the land promiſed to their fathers, "becauſe of unbelief."

They ſaw in this at once the mercy and faithfulneſs, the juſtice and ſeverity of God. Iſrael was ſtill preſerved, but every ſingle offender had died the death. The covenant made with Abraham and his ſeed ſtood firm, though they were threatened with utter extermination in Egypt, and were actually exterminated in the wilderneſs. The poſſeſſion of Canaan was made ſure to that choſen race, but not one of the murmurers at Kadeſhbarnea was permitted to ſurvive the threatened deſtruction. By an example that came ſo cloſely home to the breaſt and boſom of every man, all were admoniſhed of the abſolute ſecurity, and infallible ſucceſs of truſting in God, and of following the leadings of his providence; all were warned of the guilt and danger of diſobedience and diſtruſt.

We ſee in this the reaſon why ſo great a proportion of the ſacred oracles are delivered in the form of hiſtory. A fact makes its way directly to the heart, is eaſily remembered, and readily applied. It requires depth of underſtanding and cloſeneſs of attention to comprehend a doctrine, and to draw the proper inferences from it; but "the wayfaring man, though a fool," can diſcern the meaning, and feels the force of a plain tale of truth, and the recollection of yeſterday becomes a leſſon of conduct for to day.

2dly. This valedictory addreſs of Moſes conſiſts of a recapitulation of the laws moral, ceremonial, political and military, which he had already delivered to them in the name of God. On this account, the diviſion of the Pentateuch under conſideration, has obtained the name of *Miſchna Thora*, tranſlated by the Seventy;

Seventy ; *Deuteronomy*, that is, the *second law*, or a repetition of the law. The men were dead who heard the voice of God speaking these tremendous words from Sinai. The men of the present generation were unborn, or but emerging from childhood, when that fiery dispensation was given : but its obligation was eternal and unchangeable. Providence therefore directed it to be rehearsed aloud in the ears of the generation following, by the voice of a dying man, and to be by him left recorded in lasting characters, for the instruction of every future age. What was local and temporary of this dispensation has passed away : what was immutable and universal, remains in all its force and importance ; and shall continue, though heaven and earth were dissolved.

There is one law which Moses, in the prospect of death, presses with peculiar earnestness, as he knew it to be of special importance, and was but too well acquainted with the violent, the almost irresistible propensity of his auditory to infringe it—the law which prohibited and proscribed idolatry, that crime of complex enormity, against which the voice of the Eternal had uttered so many thunders, and which had brought on Israel so many grievous plagues. Nothing can be more energetical than the expressions he employs to expose the guilt and danger of this offence against God; nothing more dreadful than the judgments which he denounces against those who should contract it themselves, or presume to decoy others into that odious practice. He leaves them destitute of every thing like a pretext for following the nations in this impiety and absurdity, by calling to the recollection of those who were witnesses of the awful scene, and urging upon the consciences of those who were since born, " that there was no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire ;"* that therefore to pretend to imitate what never was seen, what cannot be seen, was at once ridiculous

* Deut. xiv. 15.

lous folly, and daring, impious presumption. He solemnly enjoins, that the tenderest and most respectable ties of nature be disregarded in the case of those who should dare to set the example of violating the divine will in this respect; that the most intimate friends and nearest relations should become strange and hateful, if they presumed, by precept or by practice, to countenance this transgression. His own emphatic language will best express his meaning, and shew with what oppressive weight the subject lay upon his heart. "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, (which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers; namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth) thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him. But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is, among you." * And again, "If there be found among you within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination

* Deut. xiii. 6—11.

tion is wrought in Iſrael: then ſhalt thou bring forth that man, or that woman (which have committed that wicked thing) unto thy gates, even that man, or that woman, and ſhalt ſtone them with ſtones, till they die. At the mouth of two witneſſes, or three witneſſes, ſhall he that is worthy of death, be put to death; but at the mouth of one witneſs he ſhall not be put to death. The hands of the witneſſes ſhall be firſt upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people: ſo thou ſhalt put the evil away from among you."*

Did we not know, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked:" did we not know, by fatal experience, that there is no abſurdity too groſs for men to adopt, no impiety too daring for them to commit, we ſhould be aſtoniſhed to think that the enactment of ſuch laws ſhould ever have been neceſſary; that having been enacted, there ſhould be occaſion to explain and enforce them by ſo many awful ſanctions, and that notwithſtanding, in defiance of ſanctions ſo formidable, any ſhould have been found bold enough to tranſgreſs.

3dly. Moſes labours in this, his laſt diſcourſe, to eſtabliſh the importance and neceſſity of knowing the divine law, and, for that end, of making it the ſubject of continual ſtudy and meditation. Every ſon of Iſrael muſt daily employ himſelf in the reading of it. The young muſt not plead exemption on account of his youth, nor the old plead the privilege of age. No cloſeneſs of application to ſecular buſineſs, no eagerneſs to proſecute a journey, no eminence of rank and ſtation, no, not the ſtate and neceſſary duties of royalty itſelf, muſt pretend to claim a diſpenſation from the ſuperior obligations of the law of the Moſt High. "Theſe words," ſays he, "which I command thee this day, ſhall be in thine heart. And thou ſhalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when

* Deut. xvii. 2—7.

when thou walkeſt by the way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up. And thou ſhalt bind them for a ſign upon thine hand, and they ſhall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou ſhalt write them upon the poſts of thy houſe, and on thy gates."* "And it ſhall be," ſpeaking of the duty and office of the king who might hereafter be choſen to reign over God's people of Iſrael, "when he ſitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he ſhall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the prieſts the Levites. And it ſhall be with him, and he ſhall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and theſe ſtatutes, to do them: that his heart be not liſted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aſide from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom; he, and his children in the midſt of Iſrael."†

Some of the Rabbins accordingly pretend, that Moſes, with his own hand, tranſcribed thirteen copies of the Deuteronomy, one for each of the twelve tribes, and one to be laid up till the time of electing a king ſhould arrive, to be given him to tranſcribe for his private and particular uſe.

4thly. Moſes diſplays, with ſingular ſkill and addreſs, the motives ſuggeſted from their peculiar circumſtances, to make the law of God the object of their veneration, and the rule of their conduct; ſuch as, *firſt*—Theſe laws all iſſue from the love of God as their ſource, and converge towards it as their centre. Their great aim and end is to engage us to love, with ſupreme affection, a God who is ſupremely amiable and excellent. "And now, Iſrael, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to ſerve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, to keep the commandments of the Lord,

* Deut. vi. 6—9. † Deut. xvii. 18—20.

Lord, and his ſtatutes which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God, the earth alſo, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he choſe their ſeed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day."*

A *ſecond* motive to obedience is, that the obſervance of the laws has a native tendency to procure and to preſerve both public and private felicity; to make them reſpectable in the eyes of the nations, and thereby to enſure their tranquillity. "Behold I have taught you," ſays he, "ſtatutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye ſhould do ſo, in the land whither ye go to poſſeſs it. Keep therefore, and do them, for this is your wiſdom and your underſtanding in the ſight of the nations, which ſhall hear all theſe ſtatutes, and ſay, Surely this great nation is a wiſe and underſtanding people. For what nation is there ſo great, who hath God ſo nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there ſo great, that hath ſtatutes and judgments ſo righteous, as all this law which I ſet before you this day?"†

Thirdly—The laws preſcribed were impoſed on them by a being who had laviſhed miracles of mercy and goodneſs upon them and their fathers, and ſtood engaged to be a covenant God to their poſterity, to the lateſt generations. "For aſk now of the days that are paſt, which were before thee, ſince the day that God created man upon the earth, and aſk from the one ſide of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any ſuch thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God ſpeaking out of the midſt of the fire, as thou haſt heard, and live? Or hath God aſſayed to go and take him a nation from the midſt of another nation, by temptations, by ſigns, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a ſtretched-out arm, and

* Deut. x. 12—15. † Deut. iv. 5—8.

and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else besides him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire, and thou hearedst his words out of the midst of the fire."*

In a word, the laws of God are in themselves just and reasonable, plain and intelligible; accommodated to the nature and faculties of man, and carry their own wisdom and utility engraven on their forehead. "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."†

Moses, while he thus forcibly inculcates the motives of obedience, motives inspired and pressed by every tender, by every awful consideration, finds himself under the unpleasant necessity of venting his heart in the keenest reproaches of that highly-favoured but rebellious nation, for their perverseness and ingratitude; he deplores in the bitterness of his soul, the instability and transitoriness of their good motions and purposes, their fatal proneness to revolt, the inconceivable rapidity of their vibrations from virtue to vice. That exquisitely beautiful and pathetic song with which he closes his tender expostulation, and which contains a striking abridgment of this whole address, consists in a great measure of just and severe, yet affectionate upbraidings and remonstrances upon their past conduct. "They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked

* Deut. iv. 32—36. † Deut. xxx. 11—14.

crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe? is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and eſtabliſhed thee?" *

Finally, this long, this inſtructive, this powerful farewel ſermon of the man of God, contains predictions clear, pointed and ſtrong, of the fearful judgments which ſhould overtake that ſinful people, and involve them and their poſterity in utter deſtruction. Many learned men, and not without the greateſt appearance of reaſon, have ſuppoſed that the ſpirit of prophecy by the mouth of Moſes has foretold the final diſſolution of the Jewiſh government, and their diſperſed, reproachful, deſpiſed ſtate to this day, until the time of their reſtoration to the divine favour, and their re-eſtabliſhment under the bond of the new and everlaſting covenant, "a covenant eſtabliſhed on better promiſes, ordered in all things and ſure." This idea ſeems juſtified by the following and ſimilar prophetic denunciations. "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and haſt forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord ſaw it, he abhorred them, becauſe of the provoking of his ſons, and of his daughters. And he ſaid, I will hide my face from them, I will ſee what their end ſhall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealouſy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealouſy with thoſe which are not a people, I will provoke them to anger with a fooliſh nation. For a fire is kindled in my anger, and ſhall burn unto the loweſt hell, and ſhall conſume the earth with her increaſe, and ſet on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap miſchiefs upon them, I will ſpend mine arrows upon them. They ſhall be burned with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter deſtruction: I will alſo ſend the teeth of beaſts

* Deut. xxxii. 5, 6.

upon them, with the poiſon of ſerpents of the duſt. The ſword without, and terror within ſhall deſtroy both the young man and the virgin, the ſuckling alſo, with the man of grey hairs. I ſaid I would ſcatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to ceaſe from among men."* Is not this laid up in ſtore with me, and ſealed up among my treaſures? To me belongeth vengeance, and recompenſe; their foot ſhall ſlide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that ſhall come upon them make haſte. For the Lord ſhall judge his people, and repent himſelf for his ſervants; when he ſeeth that their power is gone, and there is none ſhut up, or left. And he ſhall ſay, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they truſted, which did eat the fat of their ſacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings? Let them riſe up, and help you, and be your protection. See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and ſay, I live forever. If I whet my glittering ſword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my ſword ſhall devour fleſh; and that with the blood of the ſlain, and of the captives from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy."† But the time to favour revolted, returning Iſrael, ſhall come at length; and together with them the time to irradiate and deliver "the nations which were ſitting in darkneſs, and in the region and ſhadow of death;" and the prophetic ſoul of Moſes haſtens forward to conclude the ſacred ſong, with a grand chorus of harmonious voices, the voices of the ranſomed of the Lord from every nation, every kindred and tribe, rejoicing together in one common ſalvation: "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people:

* Deut. xxxii. 18—26. † Deut. xxxii. 34—42.

ple: for he will avenge the blood of his ſervants, and will render vengeance to his adverſaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people."*

How powerfully muſt all this have been impreſſed on the hearts of his audience by the ſight of their venerable inſtructor, bending under the weight of "an hundred and twenty years:" exhauſted by labours performed in the public ſervice, no longer capable of "going out and coming in;" excluded by the inflexible decree of Heaven from any part or lot in the land of promiſe; lying under the bitter ſentence of impending death; his power and glory departing, and paſſing before his eyes to the hand of another! Why are not impreſſions of this ſort more laſting, and more efficient? Shall "the righteous periſh, and no man lay it to heart?" Is "the merciful man taken away, and will none conſider?" "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come." By his departure the earth is impoveriſhed, but heaven is enriched. Remove the veil, and behold him "entering into peace:" "they ſhall reſt in their beds, each one walking in his uprightneſs." I hear a voice from heaven, ſaying, "Write, Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours; and their works do follow them."†

* Deut. xxxii. 43. † Rev. xiv. 13.

History of Moſes.

LECTURE VIII.

DEUTERONOMY xxxi. 7, 8.

And Moſes called unto Joſhua, and ſaid unto him in the ſight of all Iſrael, Be ſtrong, and of a good courage: for thou muſt go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath ſworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou ſhalt cauſe them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forſake thee; fear not, neither be diſmayed.

IS it not a preſumption and a preſentiment of immortality, that men naturally feel, deſign and act as if they were immortal? In life we are in the midſt of death; but it is equally true, that in the very jaws of death, we live; and fondly dream of living longer. Let the fatal moment come when it will, it comes to break into ſome ſcheme we hoped to execute, to interrupt ſome work we had begun, to diſappoint ſome purpoſe we had adopted. The warnings of diſſolution which are ſent to others, we ſeem to underſtand and feel better than thoſe which are addreſſed to ourſelves. One man is under ſentence of condemnation, another labours under an incurable diſeaſe; one is daily expoſing his life to jeopardy in the high places of the field, another putting the knife of intemperance to

to his throat every hour: this man has completed his ſeventieth year, and his neighbour has lived to ſee his children's children of the third and fourth generation.

Theſe are all ſymptoms equally mortal, but none takes the alarm to himſelf: every one is concerned for his neighbour's caſe, and flatters himſelf his own is not quite ſo deſperate. The wretch condemned to death, ſoothes his ſoul to reſt with the hope of a pardon, and laments the certain doom of his conſumptive acquaintance: the declining man, with his foot in the grave, pities and prays for the unhappy creature who muſt ſuffer on Wedneſday ſe'nnight. The ſoldier braves the death that is before his eyes in a thouſand dreadful forms, in the preſumption of victory; and the voluptuary thanks his kinder ſtars that he is likely to ſleep in a ſound ſkin. The man of ſeventy reckons upon fourſcore; and ten years in proſpect are a kind of eternity; and the grandſire amuſes himſelf with the hope of ſeeing his grandchildren ſettled in the world. Thus the pleaſing illuſion goes on: and men are dead, indeed, before they had any apprehenſion of dying.

The thoughtleſs and impious inſenſibility with which many advance to their latter end, is not more mournful and diſtreſſing, than the ſteadineſs and compoſure of piety and habitual preparation are pleaſing and inſtructive. Bleſſed is the ſtate of that man to whom life is not a burden, nor death a terror, who has "a deſire to depart and to be with Chriſt," but is willing "to continue in the fleſh," for the glory of God, and the good of men; who neither quits his ſtation and duty in life in ſullen diſcontent, nor cleaves to the enjoyments of this world, as one who has no hope beyond the grave.

But the cup of death, to the beſt of men, contains many bitter ingredients. Even to Moſes it was far from being unmixed. To the natural horror of dying was ſuperadded, the ſenſe of divine diſpleaſure; a

ſenſe

ſenſe of death as a particular puniſhment. It diſappointed a hope long and fondly indulged in, the hope of being himſelf, and of ſeeing Iſrael in poſſeſſion of the promiſed and expected inheritance. And, what was the bitterneſs of death to ſuch a ſpirit as his? Moſes died in the perſuaſion, and a melancholy one it was, that the people on whom he had beſtowed ſo much labour, whom he had cheriſhed with ſuch tender affection, whom he was ſo unremittingly anxious to conduct to wiſdom, to virtue and to happineſs, would, after his death, ſwerve from the right path, provoke God to become their enemy, and thereby bring down certain deſtruction upon their own heads. "I know thy rebellion, and thy ſtiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious againſt the Lord; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may ſpeak theſe words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record againſt them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourſelves, and turn aſide from the way which I have commanded you: and evil will befal you in the latter days; becauſe ye will do evil in the ſight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands."*

It is pleaſant to a dying father to entertain the ſweet hope that the children of his care, of his love, will remember the leſſons which he taught them, will follow out his views, will ſupport the credit of his name, will inſtruct and bleſs the world by the example of their wiſdom, their piety, their virtues, though he is not to be the happy ſpectator of it: but ah! more cruel than the pangs of diſſolving nature, the dreadful conviction of approaching folly and diſorder: the ſad proſpect of diſcord among brethren; of profligacy and licentiouſneſs, no longer reſtrained by parental gravity and authority: a fair inheritance, and an honourable name ready to be diſſipated by profuſion, to be covered

* Deut. xxxi. 27—29.

ered with ſhame, to be disfigured by vice, to be forfeited by treaſon. It is ſweet to a dying paſtor to contemplate the ſucceſs of his miniſtry, the extent of his uſefulneſs; to cheer his fainting heart with the thought of having been made the humble inſtrument of bringing many ſouls unto God, many ſons unto glory: and with the well-grounded belief that his doctrine ſhall ſurvive him: that though dead he ſhall continue to ſpeak and to inſtruct. Sweet the proſpect of that day, when he ſhall preſent himſelf, and the joyful fruit of all his labours, to his Father and God, ſaying, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for ſigns, and for wonders in Iſrael; from the Lord of hoſts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion."* It was this which cauſed the great "Author and Finiſher of our faith" himſelf to rejoice in ſpirit, on the very eve of his departure out of the world. "Thoſe that thou gaveſt me I have kept, and none of them is loſt but the ſon of perdition; that the ſcripture might be fulfilled."† But O how depreſſing to reflect, "I have laboured in vain; I have ſpent my ſtrength for nought and in vain;"‡ to look back upon a miniſtry, not the "ſavour of life unto life, but of death unto death," and to look forward to the dreadful progreſs of degeneracy and corruption, from evil to worſe, till "ſin, being finiſhed, bringeth forth death;" to look forward to the ſtill more dreadful day of doom, and to the proſpect of appearing as an accuſer and a witneſs againſt the deſpiſers of that goſpel, which would have ſaved their ſouls from death.

The faithful ſervants of God are not all equally ſucceſsful, and even a Moſes has the mortification of knowing aſſuredly that all his pains and anxieties ſhould prove ineffectual. The tide of corruption ſometimes ruſhes down ſo impetuouſly, that no force can ſtem it; and Providence is often pleaſed to put honour upon the meaner and feebler inſtrument, that the glory may redound, not "to him that willeth, nor

* Iſai. viii. 18. † John xvii. 12. ‡ Iſai. xlix. 4.

nor to him that runneth, but to God, who ſheweth mercy." But every faithful miniſter, like Moſes, has at leaſt this conſolation; "having kept nothing back, but declared the whole counſel of God, they have delivered their own ſouls;" they publiſhed the truth of God, "whether men would hear or whether they would forbear;" and if they have not been ſo happy as to perſuade, they have at leaſt put to ſilence wicked and unreaſonable men; if they have not prevailed to render them holy, they have at leaſt rendered them inexcuſeable; if they have been unable to ſubdue the pride of the creature, they have diſplayed the holineſs and juſtice of the Creator.

We find Moſes taking refuge in this, when the dearer, ſweeter hope was at an end—the hope of being the favoured, honoured miniſter of life and ſalvation. "I am faſt approaching to the end of my career; I have already paſſed the limits which God has preſcribed to the life of man. Six ſcore of years are fled away and gone, and theſe hairs, whitened by time, labour and affliction, feelingly inform me that my laſt moment is at hand, that no more time remains but what is barely ſufficient to give you a few parting admonitions, to breathe over you the bleſſing of a dying friend, and to bid you a long farewel. After a laborious, anxious and painful miniſtry of more than forty years; after being honoured of God to perform before your eyes, and thoſe of your fathers, a ſeries of miracles, which ſhall be the aſtoniſhment and inſtruction of the whole world till time expire, I was looking for the compenſation of all my troubles, the reward of all my labours, the accompliſhment of all my wiſhes, in your ſincere return to God, in your gratitude to your friend and deliverer, in your fidelity and obedience to God, and in the proſperity and happineſs which muſt infallibly have flowed from them. The paternal ſolicitude I have felt, that ardent love which emboldened me, at the hazard of my own life, "to ſtand in the breach" "between you and a holy and jealous

jealous God, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy you;" that fervour of zeal which hurried me on to wish myself blotted out of God's book, if the dearer name of Israel might be permitted to continue written in it; all my discourses, all my emotions, all my efforts; my active days, my sleepless nights; these unceasing sighs which I still breathe to Heaven in your behalf, these last tears which a dying old man sheds over a people still and ever dear to him, and from whom to be torn asunder is the death of deaths; these are the faithful and undoubted proofs of my affection for you, of my unabated, inextinguishable zeal for your salvation. But, alas, however earnestly I may desire it, I dare not, cannot hope! I foresee your perfidiousness and rebellion; I know your perverseness and ingratitude. "While I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?" * What then is left me, but the mingled and strongly allayed satisfaction of reflecting that I am innocent of your blood, that your salvation is in your own hands, that if you perish, your blood must be upon your own heads." "Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them."† "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."‡

Having in terms such as these poured out the anguish of an overflowing heart, Moses addresses himself to his last earthly employment. The last exercise of his authority is to lay down all authority. The concluding act of his administration, is to transfer the right of administration to another; and the legislator, leader and commander expires, while the man yet lives.

* Deut. xxxi. 27. † Deut. xxxi. 28.
‡ Chap. xxx. 19.

lives. Imagination can hardly paint a more affecting ſcene. Hear the trumpet ſounding the proclamation of a ſolemn aſſembly, an holy convocation. Behold the thouſands of Iſrael flocking together to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; every eye ſtraining to catch a departing glance of him whom they were to behold no more; every ear eagerly attentive to drink in the laſt accents of that voice which the hand of death was about to ſilence forever. Behold the venerable ſage, in all the compoſure of unaffected piety, in all the dignity of wiſdom, in all the reſpectability of age, in all the ſimplicity of a child, in all the ſerenity of a celeſtial ſpirit, in all the ſolemnity of death, advancing to his well-known ſtation, preſenting to the people him whom they were henceforward to acknowledge and obey as the ruler appointed over them by Heaven. His eyes beam complacency, his tongue drops manna, as he conveys to his noble ſucceſſor the plenitude of his power, the reſidue of his honour, a double portion of his ſpirit. Behold he lifts up his hands and lays them upon the head of Joſhua, with a thouſand tender wiſhes that his burden might ſit light upon him, that he might eſcape the pains he himſelf had endured, and attain the felicity which was denied to him: with a thouſand paternal exhortations to follow Providence, and fear nothing; to love Iſrael, to ſeek their good always: with a thouſand fervent prayers for his proſperity and ſucceſs. I ſee Joſhua with modeſt reluctance ſhrinking back from a charge ſo weighty: deſirous of being ſtill a ſubject and a ſervant: accepting with regret honours of which Moſes muſt be ſtripped; ready to cry out, as his maſter was taken away from him, "My father, my father, the chariot of Iſrael, and the horſemen thereof!" I ſee on every countenance a mixture of ſorrow and reſignation, of hope clouded with remorſe and concern; they could now die for him, whoſe life they had embittered by unkindneſs, levity and ingratitude; they

* 2 Kings ii. 12.

they reproch themselves and one another, as having occasioned the death of the wisest and best of men; they cannot bear to think of surviving him. But a voice more awful than that of man is heard; a glory more than human appears. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle."* What solemn moments to the whole congregation, those which Moses and Joshua passed before the Lord, remote from the public eye! How solemn to the parties themselves! What is a charge from the mouth of a dying man, though that man be a Moses, compared to a charge from the mouth of Jehovah himself, by whom spirits are weighed, and to whom all the dread importance of eternity stands continually revealed? And this God, O my friends, is daily sounding a charge in every ear, "Occupy till I come." "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." "Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

This secret conference being ended, they return to the people, and Moses publickly delivers to the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, a copy of the law which he had transcribed with his own hand, to be laid up in the side of the ark, as a standing witness for God against a sinful people; and the business of this interesting and eventful day concludes with a public recital from the lips of Moses of that tender and pathetic song, which we have in the thirty-second chapter. This sacred song every Israelite was

* Deut. xxxi. 14, 15.

was to commit to memory, to repeat frequently, and to teach it every man to his son. It was composed expressly by the command of God, and under his immediate inspiration. "Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song until they were ended." *

And a most wonderful composition it is, whether considered as the production of a lively, lofty, correct imagination; abounding with the boldest images, and conveying the noblest sentiments; adding all the graces of poetry to all the force of truth; as conveying the most useful and necessary moral and religious instruction, in a channel the most pleasing and attractive; as the address of a dying man, a dying father, a dying minister, to his friends, to his family, to his flock; abounding with the tenderest touches of nature, flowing immediately from the heart, and rushing with impetuous force to the lips; as the awful witness of the great God against a disobedient and gainsaying race; exhibiting to this hour the proof of the authenticity of that record where it stands, of the truth and faithfulness, of the mercy and severity of the dread Jehovah, and of the certainty of the things wherein, as Christians, we have been instructed.

What can equal the boldness and sublimity of his exordium or introduction? How is the boasted eloquence of Greece and Rome left at an infinite distance behind! What a coldness in the address of Demosthenes and Cicero, compared to the fervour and elevation of the Israelitish orator! "Ye men of Athens." "Romans." "Conscript Fathers." If ever there was an audience that demanded respect, from numbers, from importance, from situation; if ever there was

* Deut. xxxi. 19—22—30.

was a ſpeaker prompted by duty, drawn by inclination, urged on by the ſpur of the occaſion, Iſrael was that audience, Moſes that ſpeaker, on this ever-memorable day. But the ardent ſoul of this heaven-taught orator, with thouſands upon thouſands before his eyes, graſps, with a noble enthuſiaſm, an infinitely larger ſpace than the plains of Moab, an audience infinitely more auguſt than the thouſands of Iſrael. "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will ſpeak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." This was ſeizing the attention at once; the ſolid globe, thus ſummoned, ſeems to give ear, the celeſtial ſpheres ſtand ſtill to liſten, angels hover on the wing to mark and record the laſt words of the departing prophet; what mortal ear then can be inattentive, what ſpirit careleſs? How ſweetly calculated is the next ſentence to compoſe the minds of his hearers, rouſed and alarmed by the ſolemnity of his firſt addreſs. The thunder of heaven ſeemed ready to burſt upon their heads, after an invocation ſo awful, and though Moſes alone ſpake, they were ready to die; but their fears are gently lulled to reſt, the next word he utters; he has only love in his heart, and honey upon his tongue. "My doctrine ſhall drop as the rain: my ſpeech ſhall diſtil as the dew, as the ſmall rain upon the tender herb, and as the ſhowers upon the graſs."* The final object of Moſes being to warn, to admoniſh, and to reprove the perverſe nation of whom he was taking leave, obſerve how ſkilfully he manages this difficult and delicate part of his taſk. To have come directly and without preparation to it, had been to give certain diſguſt and offence; for he had to deal with a moody, murmuring, irritable, diſcontented race; he therefore firſt fills their minds with great images, leads them to the contemplation of one object ſurpaſſingly grand; impreſſes it in various points of view upon their hearts and conſciences, till having loſt themſelves in its grandeur and immenſity, they are prepared

* Deut. xxxii. 2.

pared to bear, to approve, and to profit by the severe personal attack that follows. "Because I will publish the name of the Lord; ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he."*

Having thus raised them above every mean, every selfish consideration; and placed them, and made them to feel themselves in the awful presence of the great God, "who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works," he descends abruptly, by a transition quick as lightning, to the censure he had in view. But even then, he insinuates it, rather than charges it home; and speaks for some time as of strangers, as of persons absent; and constitutes his auditors judges as it were of the case of others, not their own; and by employing the address of the third person, *they* and *their*, leaves them for a moment in uncertainty whom he could mean; and when he comes at length to address them in the second person, and to use the terms *thee* and *thy*, how delicately is the application qualified, by the introduction of every tender, every melting, every conciliating circumstance! "*They* have corrupted themselves, *their* spot is not the spot of his children: *they* are a perverse and crooked generation. Do *ye* thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he *thy* Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?"†

He then goes into a recapitulation, partly historical, partly poetic, partly allegorical, at once to refresh the memory, to fire the imagination, and to exercise the invention, of the divine conduct towards them and their fathers, during many generations, that the conclusion he was about to draw might fall with irresistible weight upon the minds of all; that their base ingratitude and desperate folly might appear to themselves in a more odious light, when contrasted with the

* Deut. xxxii. 3, 4. † Deut. xxxii. 5, 6.

the wisdom, goodness and loving-kindness of the Lord. This occupies a considerable part of the chapter, from the seventh verse to the eighteenth, and a passage it is of exquisite force and beauty, as I am convinced you will also think upon a careful perusal of it.

Constrained at last to denounce the righteous judgment of God, in order to approve his own fidelity, and if possible to prevent the ruin which he feared, he makes a display of the awful terrors of divine justice, sufficient to awaken the dead, and to confound the living; and to increase its force and vehemence, Moses disappears, and God, the great God himself, comes forward, and in the first person utters the seven thunders of his wrath; "For a fire is kindled in my anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. The sword without and terror within shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also, with the man of grey hairs."*

The prophet as it were exhausted with this violent exertion, this formidable denunciation of vengeance, sinks into feeble, hopeless regret, and he reluctantly, despairingly deplores that misery which he can neither prevent nor avert. "They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?"†

Finally, a dawn of hope arises, and, wrapt into future times, the sacred bard hails the coming day of deliverance, and exults in the prospect of the junction of the nations with the ancient people of God, in the participation of one and the same great salvation. "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his

* Deut. xxxii. 22. 25. † Deut. xxxii. 28, 29, 30.

his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land and to his people."*

Such is the structure, such the general outline of this inimitable piece of sacred poesy. If what has been said shall induce any one to study it more attentively, he will probably discover beauties which have escaped us; and the discovery will bring its own reward. How many fathers, as they afterwards rehearsed the words of this song in the ears of their children, and taught them the knowledge of it, would recollect with a mournful pleasure, that they saw and heard Moses himself recite it aloud, on the very last day of his life; and glory in relating how near him they stood, and in describing to a new generation the form of his countenance, the deportment of his person, the tones of his voice!

That very day, the warrant of death arrives. The ministry of even a Moses is accomplished, and Providence hastens to convince the world, that, depart who will, the work of Heaven never can stand still. We have seen him hitherto engaged in active labours for Israel and for God. We shall consider him yet once more, dismissed from his service, and concluding a life of eminent usefulness, by a death of charity, benediction, prescience and resignation. May God impress on our minds a sense of our frailty, mortality and accountableness, that we may redeem the time, fulfil the duties of our day and the design of our Creator, work out our salvation, and so die in peace, die in hope, whenever it shall please Him to call us away to the world of spirits. Amen.

* Deut. xxxii. 43.

History

History of Moſes.

LECTURE IX.

DEUTERONOMY XXXI. 1.

And this is the bleſſing wherewith Moſes the man of God bleſſed the children of Iſrael before his death.

SENECA, the celebrated Roman moraliſt, was preceptor to the Emperor Nero, and had early and ſtudiouſly trained him to virtue. But falling under the diſpleaſure of that ſanguinary tyrant, he was condemned to loſe his life, by being blooded to death. The day of execution being arrived, he prepared to meet his fate with intrepidity, and to die as he had lived, in communicating uſeful knowledge. His pupils gathered round him, eager to mark his dying deportment, and provided with their writing tables, to record and preſerve his laſt ſayings. He was put into the warm bath, the arteries of his legs and arms were opened, and the purple fluid which ſuſtains life, gradually drained off, while his ſorrowing, admiring diſciples caught the words as they fell from his parched lips.

But a greater than Seneca is here. We are this night gathered round a dying Moſes, to liſten to the laſt accents of that tongue which, one excepted, ſpake as never man ſpake. We behold him neither impetuouſly ruſhing forwards into the mortal conflict, nor timidly ſhrinking from it; but advancing with a ſteady, majeſtic ſtep, to meet the king of terrors. The intereſts of the God of Iſrael, and of the Iſrael of

God, had employed his thoughts all his life long; and, blended in one, they glow in and expand his heart to his lateſt moment. He was ſpeedily to ceaſe from every earthly care, to ceaſe from ſerving Iſrael any longer, to be occupied with God only; but even in death he is contriving the means of doing good to that dearly beloved, that fondly cheriſhed people. As if his heart had relented at the harſhneſs of ſome of the expreſſions which fidelity and a ſenſe of duty had extorted from him; like one unwilling to part with them under any ſemblance of unkindneſs or diſpleaſure, he again aſſumes the tender father, tunes his tongue to the law of kindneſs, buries all reſentment of the paſt, and every thing unpleaſant, in the proſpects of futurity, in the gentleneſs and benevolence of friends who were ſeparating to meet no more.

The ſoul that is at peace with God deſires to be at peace with all men; and it is meet that dying breath be ſweetened with mercy, forgiveneſs and love. Slowly and ſolemnly as Moſes advanced to meet his latter end, would we accompany his ſteps in his laſt progreſs through the beloved tents of Iſrael, and in his aſcent to the hill, from whence he never ſhould return. With a heart like his, overflowing with charity to the whole church of God, and filled with ſentiments of peculiar affection towards you, we behold the approach of that hour which is to diſperſe us, perhaps too forever. With a bleſſing on our lips, like him, and O that his God and ours may make it effectual, we are haſtening to bid you farewel.

The words which I have read are the beginning of the 54th and laſt *paraſha*, or great ſection of the law, into which the whole books of Moſes were ſubdivided, for the conveniency of publickly reading them, in conjunction with the prophets, every ſabbath day; a cuſtom which prevailed in the Jewiſh church, down to the times of our Saviour and his apoſtles, as we learn from ſeveral paſſages of the goſpel hiſtory. Thus Chriſt himſelf, "when he came to Nazareth, where he

he had been brought up, as his cuſtom was, went into the ſynagogue, on the ſabbath-day, and ſtood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Eſaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the goſpel to the poor: he hath ſent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of ſight to the blind, to ſet at liberty them that are bruiſed: to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he cloſed the book, and he gave it again to the miniſter, and ſat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the ſynagogue were faſtened on him. And he began to ſay unto them, this day is this ſcripture fulfilled in your ears."* Thus James, in determining the queſtion in the ſynod of Jeruſalem, concerning the neceſſity of circumciſion, ſays, "Moſes of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the ſynagogues every ſabbath day."† And Paul and Barnabas, when "they came to Antioch, in Piſidia, went into the ſynagogue on the ſabbath-day, and ſat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the ſynagogue ſent unto them, ſaying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, ſay on." ‡

The firſt ſection begins with the opening of the book of Geneſis, and goes up to the ninth verſe of the ſixth chapter, and is called *Bereſhit*, the firſt word in the Hebrew bible. The ſecond begins at theſe words in the ſixth chapter, "Theſe are the generations of Noah:" and is thence called *Noah*, and ends at the beginning of chapter twelfth, which ſets out with the call of Abraham, and is therefore ſtyled the ſection *Lec Leca*, i. e. "Get thee out," and ſo of the reſt. To bring the whole fifty-four diviſions within the compaſs of the year, they joined two of the ſhorteſt into

* Luke iv. 16—21. † Acts xv. 21.

‡ Acts xiii. 14, 15.

one reading. Thus the whole conſtitution, both as to civil and ſacred things, was publickly rehearſed once every year; ſo that it was impoſſible for any decent Iſraelite to be groſsly ignorant of either the laws, the hiſtory, or the religion of his country.

The firſt public lecture was on the ſabbath that followed the feaſt of tabernacles, and went on till the anniverſary of that feaſt returned. I have mentioned theſe circumſtances for ſeveral reaſons. I am not ill pleaſed to have ſo reſpectable an example for attempting a mode of inſtruction, which reaſon and experience convince us to be at once the moſt pleaſant and the moſt uſeful. I honour human learning, I admire great talents, I am enchanted with eloquence; but I am perſuaded, if *ſaving* knowledge be communicated, it is by the quick and powerful energy of God's word coming, not with the allurements of man's wiſdom, "but in demonſtration of the Spirit, and of power." This leads us to expreſs a wonder why the reading of the ſcriptures by large portions at a time is not univerſally practiſed in chriſtian congregations. Surely there muſt be a better reaſon for neglecting it, than that it is enjoined by the canons of the church, and is in general practice in the eſtabliſhment. The laſt reaſon I have at preſent to render for this digreſſion, if it be thought one, is its affording me an opportunity of earneſtly recommending to maſters and miſtreſſes of families, the regular and progreſſive uſe of the ſcriptures, within the precincts of their private houſeholds, for the inſtruction of their children and ſervants. I am well aware that from a diffidence and humility not too ſeverely to be blamed, ſome younger heads of families are tempted to neglect family worſhip altogether, becauſe ſome parts of it they cannot, dare not, undertake: that for example, of addreſſing God in prayer, as the mouth of their domeſtic little church. Let them begin with reading aloud the word of God: for this ſurely they have courage ſufficient. They will be brought to pray inſenſibly, they will ſoon ceaſe to be

aſhamed

aſhamed of that which is their higheſt honour and moſt glorious privilege. We now return.

The idea I have formed to myſelf of "this bleſſing, wherewith Moſes the man of God bleſſed the children of Iſrael before his death,"* how juſtly I preſume not to ſay, is this: Moſes, having received his final ſummons to prepare for death, feels himſelf prompted at once by affection and the ſpirit of prophecy, to take a particular leave of every tribe, to beſtow a ſeveral benediction on every one by name, and to prepare them one by one for the conqueſt of their inheritance, by giving them prophetically a general notion of their future condition, as conſtituent parts of the commonwealth of Iſrael, and of the particular lot to be aſſigned to each, with its correſponding advantages and purſuits. For this purpoſe I ſuppoſe him making a ſolemn progreſs through the whole hoſt, going, from tribe to tribe, from tent to tent, and pouring out his ſoul, as a dying parent, in bleſſings upon his offspring, according to their different characters and conditions. O how unlike theſe viſits of ſelfiſhneſs, pride, ambition and ſtrife, which the candidates for fame, place and power, are from time to time, making through a corrupted land! Let us attend his progreſs, and mark what he ſays.

We find Moſes ſtill beginning, proceeding, concluding with God. He ſets out on this laſt awful circuit, with a mind full of the glorious majeſty of the great Jehovah. He calls to his own remembrance, and impreſſes the image of it on the ſouls of the whole people, that great and dreadful day "when the Lord came from Sinai, and roſe up from Seir unto them; he ſhined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thouſands of ſaints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them."† The particular mention of Seir and Paran in this exordium, has given birth to a poor conceit in the Jeruſalem Targum, to this purpoſe, "that God firſt offered his law, and the protection

* Deut. xxxiii. 1. † Deut. xxxiii. 2.

tion which it afforded, to the Idumeans, the inhabitants of Mount Seir, and the poſterity of Eſau, but that they rejected it, becauſe it contained this precept, "Thou ſhalt not kill." That afterwards it was tendered to the Iſhmaelites, or inhabitants of Mount Paran, who rejected it, becauſe it ſaid, "Thou ſhalt not ſteal." That then it was propoſed to the poſterity of Jacob, who immediately replied, "All that the Lord hath commanded will we do, and be obedient." Without having recourſe to a conſtruction ſo unſupported, forced and unnatural, the words of Moſes, at the firſt glance, convey to us an image inconceivably grand and ſublime, but at the ſame time ſimple, natural and obvious. Iſrael was encamped in the plains of Moab, with Jordan and the fertile fields of Canaan directly in view: the proſpect on the ſouth terminated by the lofty mountains of Teman or Seir; and on the north by Mount Paran, while Sinai raiſed its awful head, and buried it in the clouds of heaven from behind. Moſes accordingly repreſents, in the bold imagery of oriental poetry, the glory of the Lord ariſing like the ſun in the eaſt, from behind the top of Sinai, and inſtantly darting his light from hill to hill, and increaſing in luſtre till the whole expanſe of heaven is filled with it. The prophet Habakkuk has evidently caught the ſame celeſtial fire, is filled with the ſame animating object, when he exclaims, "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praiſe. And his brightneſs was as the light, he had horns coming out of his hand, and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the peſtilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He ſtood and meaſured the earth: he beheld, and drove aſunder the nations, and the everlaſting mountains were ſcattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlaſting." *

But

* Habak. iii. 3—6.

But what are mountains and hills, and their inhabitants? Moſes repreſents the great God as ariſing in unclouded majeſty amidſt ten thouſand of his holy ones. "Angels, his miniſters, that excel in ſtrength," the leaſt of whom "could wield theſe elements." His red right hand is extended, preſenting to the aſtoniſhed beholder a law, a fiery law, a fire that purifies, a fire that conſumes. But the terror of this dreadful appearance is inſtantly loſt, in a diſplay of the grace and mercy which prompted this ſplendid viſit. "Yea, he loved the people; all his ſaints are in thy hand: and they ſat down at thy feet; every one ſhall receive of thy words."* Here we behold the legiſlator loſt in the friend, and, inſtead of diſtractedly, deſpairingly calling upon "the mountains to fall upon us, and the hills to cover us," we ſit down in tranquillity at the feet of our gracious teacher, and every one for himſelf liſtens to the language of love.

Moſes firſt approaches the tents of the tribe of Reuben, and having introduced himſelf by theſe ſolemn, ſtriking words, he proceeds to his particular ſalutation of that tribe. "Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few."† Concerning the head of that tribe, his dying father had prophetically denounced, "Unſtable as water, thou ſhalt not excel;" but the bleſſing of Moſes ſeems to wipe the blot out of the ſcutcheon, and Reuben ſeems reſtored to his rank in Iſrael again. Reuben alone of the ſons of Jacob pitied Joſeph in his diſtreſs, and contrived the means of reſtoring him to his father again. This redeems him and his family from infamy and deſtruction, and we are diſpoſed to drown the memory of his lewdneſs, in reſpect for his tenderneſs and humanity.

Who ſtands next on the roll of Jacob's ſons? To whom is the ſecond ſalutation due? Simeon. But ah! we ſee the curſe of a dying father upon him; we

* Deut. xxxiii. 3. † Deut. xxxiii. 6.

we see Moses passing by his door without bidding him God speed; we see the blood of the Shechemites, the innocent, credulous Shechemites, lying with an oppressive weight upon his seed; we see a tribe of fifty-nine thousand three hundred in the wilderness of Sinai, melted down and reduced to twenty-two thousand two hundred in the plains of Moab; we see no judge or magistrate in future times springing from his loins; we see him "divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel," and in all this we see the vengeance of a righteous God pursuing a cool and deliberate murderer to utter ruin, and we think of the more dreadful weight of that blood which a hard-hearted race imprecated upon themselves and their children; and which the shame and sufferings of one thousand eight hundred years have not yet expiated. What must the sons of Simeon have felt when their dying leader passed them by, without vouchsafing them a word; to find themselves alone unblessed of all the children of their father's house! Speak to me, O merciful Father, in whatever language thou wilt: chide, upbraid, chastise me; but O pass me not by in silent neglect: cease not to reprove me: say not, "Let him alone."

The dying prophet passes next to the standard of the tribe of Judah. Judah, destined to empire, increase and strength, Judah the father of many princes. The root and offspring of David. "And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah; and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him, and be thou an help to him from his enemies."* These words of Moses send us again to the dying bed of Jacob, and we find both patriarchs holding the same idea concerning this prerogative tribe, strength invincible, triumph over every foe, supreme authority; and we find ourselves led still farther back, to Leah, his mother, in child-birth, bestowing on this her fourth son a name expressive of her personal exultation and triumph; "Judah, praise the

* Deut. xxxiii. 7.

the Lord," and thence to the infinitely glorious deſign of Providence, which has ſwallowed up the tranſient, private feeling of the individual, in the great and comprehenſive view of general compaſſion and favour, and the ſource of univerſal gratitude and praiſe; and, borne on the wings of inſpiration, we riſe, with the beloved diſciple in viſion, to contemplate the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, prevailing to open the ſealed book, in the right hand of him that ſits on the throne, and looſing the ſeven ſeals thereof. "And I beheld, and lo, in the midſt of the throne, and of the four beaſts, and in the midſt of the elders, ſtood a Lamb, as it had been ſlain, having ſeven horns, and ſeven eyes, which are the ſeven ſpirits of God, ſent forth into all the earth." "And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that ſat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beaſts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of ſaints. And they ſung a new ſong, ſaying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeals thereof: for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and haſt made us unto our God, kings and prieſts: and we ſhall reign on the earth."*

Thus we behold all that is great and magnificent among men, bringing its glory and honour and laying it at the feet of Jeſus; and all that is paſt and preſent loſt in the immenſity and importance of that which is to come.

He now approaches the prieſtly tribe of Levi, his kinſmen and friends according to the fleſh, and copiouſly beſtows his valedictory benediction upon them, in theſe remarkable words, "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didſt prove at Maſſah, and with whom thou didſt ſtrive at the

* Rev. v. 7—10.

the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again."*

Levi had been a partaker with Simeon, in shedding the blood of the Shechemites, and had fallen under the same condemnation; but their spirit and zeal in expiating the guilt of the golden calf by the blood of its idolatrous worshippers, has removed the stain, and restored their own blood again, and the dreadful sentence, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel," as far as it affects them, is from a curse turned into a blessing. They are divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel, but it is honourably to themselves and usefully to others: as the priests of the Lord, and the instructors of the people. Why may we not suppose Eliezer the high-priest, arrayed in his sacerdotal vestments, standing at the head of his tribe to receive the salutation of Moses, and that the appearance of this sacred officer in the splendour of his pontifical garb, might suggest to Moses some of the particulars contained in this blessing, especially the beginning of it? "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one." "Thy Thummim and thy Urim," that is, being interpreted, "thy perfections and thy lights." They were mysteries, of which we have spoken in a former Lecture, put into the high-priest's breast-plate, and were designed apparently to signify the graces and office of the priesthood, which was committed to Aaron and his seed, till Christ came, who should obtain and exercise an everlasting and unchangeable priesthood,

* Deut. xxxiii. 8—11.

hood, after a more excellent order than that of Aaron.

According to the different ideas of the myſtery of the Urim and Thummim, and the connexion here eſtabliſhed between them and the temptation at Maſſah and the ſtrife at Meribah, various turns and interpretations have been given to the words of Moſes.

1. They are ſuppoſed to be addreſſed to God himſelf, and the ſenſe to run thus, "Thy Thummim and thy Urim" (O God) be with the man, thy gracious ſaint, (Aaron and his ſeed) whom thou temptedſt with temptation, or contendedſt with (for his ſin) at the waters of Meribah, of which we have the hiſtory. Numb. xx. "And the Lord ſpake unto Moſes and Aaron, Becauſe ye believed me not, to ſanctify me in the eyes of the children of Iſrael; therefore ye ſhall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah, becauſe the children of Iſrael ſtrove with the Lord: and he was ſanctified in them."*

Or, 2dly, they may be addreſſed to the whole tribe, and with this ſenſe, Thy Thummim and thy Urim (O Levi) be with Aaron and his ſons! the holy, choſen, anointed one of thy gracious God, whom thou, in common with the reſt of Iſrael, temptedſt in Maſſah and in the ſtrife at Meribah.

Or, 3dly, underſtanding by the "holy one," the Chriſt of God, this will be the ſenſe, Thy Thummim and thy Urim (O Levi) is with (or belongs to) the man thy Holy One, (Meſſiah, the Chriſt) the Holy One of God, whom thou temptedſt at Maſſah, and didſt ſtrive with at Meribah. In this laſt interpretation, the weakneſs, inſufficiency, imperfection and tranſitorineſs of the Levitical prieſthood are implied: it retained not long the Urim and Thummim, but loſt them in the Babyloniſh captivity, as we find from Ezra, chap. ii. ver. 63. "And the Tirſhatha ſaid unto them, That they ſhould not eat of the moſt holy things till there ſtood

* Numb. xx. 12, 13.

ſtood up a prieſt with Urim and with Thummim." And it does not appear they ever had them more, until by Jeſus Chriſt, our High-Prieſt after the order of Aaron, they were reſtored in the "light and truth" of the goſpel.

The bleſſing upon Levi thus proceeds; "Who ſaid unto his father, and to his mother, I have not ſeen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have obſerved thy word, and kept thy covenant."* This is generally underſtood to expreſs the devotedneſs of that tribe to the worſhip and ſervice of God, which laid them under a neceſſity of abſtractedneſs from the world, and conſtrained them, when employed in the order of their courſe, to ſuppreſs all appearance of ſecular concern, ſuch as mourning for the dead, and the like. Thus when "Nadab and Abihu periſhed by fire before the Lord," Aaron and his two ſurviving ſons were expreſsly forbid to ſhew any ſigns of ſorrow. "Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, leſt ye die." "And Aaron held his peace." The words are by many interpreters ſuppoſed particularly to refer to the judgment executed through the zeal of this tribe on their offending brethren in the matter of the golden calf, which is thus deſcribed: "And Moſes ſtood in the gate of the camp, and ſaid, Who is on the Lord's ſide? let him come unto me. And all the ſons of Levi gathered themſelves together unto him. And he ſaid unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael, put every man his ſword by his ſide, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and ſlay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moſes: and there fell of the people that day about three thouſand men. For Moſes had ſaid, Conſecrate yourſelves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his ſon, and upon his brother; that he may beſtow upon you a bleſſing this

* Deut. xxxiii. 9.

this day."* And it may perhaps be intended as a warning to the christian priesthood, that though their profession does not call them wholly to renounce the world, to restrain the workings of natural affection, and cease to be men; yet it does call them to a higher degree of heavenly-mindedness, to stricter self-government, to a greater superiority to worldly attachments and pursuits, to have no respect of persons in dispensing the bread of life, to "know no man after the flesh," to sit looser than others to the things of time.

The next article of their prophet's parting blessing describes their glorious privileges. "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar." The priest's lips should keep knowledge.

This then is the first duty of their office; to "teach Jacob the judgments of God, and Israel his law." Theirs was to be the distinguished honour of training up every succeeding generation as it arose, in the knowledge of the God of their fathers, in what he had done for them, and what he required of them; of pointing out and inculcating upon them the connexion between their privileges and their duties, their safety and their obedience, their security and their fidelity. They were still to set before the people "good and evil, the blessing and the curse," the promises which allured to the one, the threatenings which deterred from the other. They were under the necessity, of consequence, of studying the law of God, and the history of his providence themselves, in order to the instruction of others; and to exhibit a decent conformity, in their own deportment, to what was written, as a pattern to their fellow-citizens. A task at once painful, dangerous and honourable.

The second duty of their station was, "to put incense before God." That sacred perfume was emblematical of the prayers, the praises and thanksgiving of

* Exod. xxxii. 26—29.

of Israel; and on Levi was conferred the glorious privilege of standing between God and the people, of conveying from him to them the dictates of his will, the promises of his grace, the assurance of his favour and protection; and, as the mouth of the people, to re-convey to God, the effusions of their gratitude, the acknowledgment of their submission and dependence; their entire confidence in the truth and faithfulness of God, their entire hope in his mercy. These the sons of Levi were to present before the Lord as incense; and with this sacrifice of praise from the people, the incense of their own grateful acknowledgments would naturally mingle and ascend.

Finally, the blessing pronounced on this distinguished tribe, imposed on them the office of offering up "whole burnt sacrifice upon the altar of God." They not only stood between a gracious God and an indebted people; but a holy and offended God, and a frail, offending people. Hence the necessity of "burnt sacrifice," hence the idea of atonement, hence the shedding of blood for the remission of sin, hence the institution of the Levitical priesthood—"the shadow of good things to come." And thus the daily sacrifice, the intercession of the house of Aaron, and the united characters of teacher and priest in the same person, prefigured and pointed out "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."—"The one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." The great Teacher sent from God, "who spake as never man spake." "God's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased."

The conclusion of the benediction is prophetic, and descriptive of their reward, their inheritance, and security. "Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." * This is the perfection of creature happiness; ample provision, and the blessing of the

* Deut. xxxiii. 11.

the Almighty poured down, and reſting upon it—works and labours of love cheerfully performed, and graciouſly accepted—every foe ſubdued, and every ground of fear forever removed. Here may we not apply to this tribe in particular, what Moſes, in the cloſe, applies to Iſrael in general? "Happy art thou O *Levi*: who is like unto thee, O people ſaved by the Lord, the ſhield of thy help, and who is the ſword of thy excellency! and thine enemies ſhall be found liars unto thee, and thou ſhalt tread upon their high places."*

Such were the functions, the privileges, the honours and the emoluments of the Levitical prieſthood. They ſuggeſt to the chriſtian miniſtry, the vigilance, diligence, fidelity and zeal which become thoſe "who muſt give account"—the neceſſity laid upon them "to declare the whole counſel of God"—the aſſured ſupport on which they may depend, while they conſcientiouſly aim at doing their duty—the glorious "recompenſe of reward," which is laid up for "the good and faithful ſervant," in that day "when they that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars forever and ever."† May the power of ſuch motives be felt and underſtood by all who bear the ſacred and important office, that by them they may be rendered "ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The farther progreſs of Moſes through the remaining tribes of Iſrael ſhall be the ſubject of the next Lecture.

* Deut. xxxiii. 29. † Dan. xii. 3.

History of Moſes.

LECTURE X.

DEUTERONOMY XXXI. 1.

And this is the bleſſing wherewith Moſes the man of God bleſſed the children of Iſrael before his death.

THE rich man in hell is repreſented* as entertaining the fond belief, that the return of one from the dead would certainly be effectual, to the conviction and amendment of a thoughtleſs and impenitent generation. And men in general are diſpoſed to aſcribe an infallible efficacy to means fabricated in their own imagination, while, at the ſame time, they wilfully neglect to uſe thoſe which God has appointed, whoſe operation is undoubted, and of which they are in the entire poſſeſſion. The man of one talent lays it up in a napkin and buries it, becauſe he cannot, with one, do the work of five or of ten. One man is an infidel, becauſe the miraculous powers which once accompanied the preaching of the goſpel, accompany it no more; another affects to deſpiſe all external evidence whatever, and looks at Chriſtianity with a ſuſpicious eye, becauſe it called in miracles and prophecy to confirm and ſupport it. The Jews rejected the counſel of God againſt themſelves, ſaying, "He caſteth out devils, by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."† The Greeks

* Luke xvi. 27, 28. † Matth. xii. 24.

Greeks accounted the doctrine of the croſs fooliſhneſs, becauſe it belied their vain philoſophy, and expoſed their worldly ſpirit.

Were it poſſible for the human race to aſſemble in one general council, in order to ſettle a mode of religion which ſhould ſuit the whole, they would ſpeedily be conſtrained to ſeparate, without coming to any ſpecific, deciſive agreement on a point ſo eſſential; for pride, and ſelfiſhneſs, and the ſpirit of contradiction, would inſtantly raiſe oppoſition, and the moſt ſalutary idea would be rejected by one party, for no better reaſon than that it was adopted by another. Were the rich man to come from the dead, commiſſioned "to tell the ſecrets of his priſon-houſe;" were Lazarus permitted to leave the boſom of Abraham, in order to diſplay to men the glories of paradiſe; what could they ſay that has not been repeated a thouſand and a thouſand times? The one would be eſteemed by a buſy, careleſs, unbelieving world, a poor, moping, melancholy wretch, fit for a place in Bedlam; the other would be called an enthuſiaſtic viſionary; and they might, for ought the world cared, return to the places from whence they came, and report that mankind was better employed than to liſten to their dreams; that it was election time; that the term was coming on, that a packet was expected, or a fleet arrived.

Men amuſe themſelves with crying up the advantages of thoſe who ſaw Chriſt going about doing good, "healing all manner of ſickneſs among the people;" of thoſe who heard Paul preach, and the like; but the faithful and true witneſs aſſures us, that Jeſus frequently wrought miracles, and Paul preached in vain. Capernaum, Bethſaida, Jeruſalem, remained full of unbelievers; and apoſtolic eloquence was called babbling by one, it made another to ſhake under a temporary fit of trembling, and only "almoſt perſuaded" a third to be a chriſtian.

The decision of father Abraham then, in the passage already referred to, is founded in truth and experience. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."* Moses spake from the brink of the grave, and was forgotten the moment his voice ceased. God himself thundered from Sinai, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me:"† and within "a little month" we see all Israel dancing round a golden calf, and saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."‡ The Son of Man came down from heaven, disclosed the secrets of the eternal mind; descended into the grave, and returned to the earth, and shewed himself openly. But did infidelity stop her mouth? No. "Some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."§

The circumstances in which Moses took his last long farewel of his beloved charge, were such, one would think, as to leave a lasting, an indelible impression on the minds of his hearers; but the sequel shews us, that the impressions of gratitude, sympathy, sorrow and

* Luke xvi. 13. † Exod. xx. 4, 5.

‡ Exod. xxxii. 4. § Matt. xxviii. 11—15.

and regret, are "as the morning cloud and the early dew, which paſſeth away."

—Having finiſhed his courſe, and the time of his departure drawing nigh, we behold the man of God making his final progreſs through the camp of Iſrael; going from tribe to tribe, from ſtandard to ſtandard, ſaluting every one by his name, and pronouncing over him the cordial benediction of a dying friend. We have accompanied him from Reuben to Judah, and from Judah to Levi, and heard his dying breath confirm the promiſe of royal dignity to the one, and entail the ſacred dignity of the prieſthood upon the other. They have heard his laſt adieu. Their eyes ſhall behold him no more. He has now arrived at the encampment of Benjamin. Benjamin, the ſon of his mother's ſorrow, the ſon of his father's right hand: the laſt of Iſrael in the courſe of nature, not the leaſt in the affection of his ſole ſurviving parent, nor in importance as one of the heads of the holy commonwealth. Benjamin, deſtined of Providence to ſupport the throne of David, when ſhaken by the revolt of ten tribes. And what is the bleſſing of Benjamin? "Of Benjamin he ſaid, The beloved of the Lord ſhall dwell in ſafety by him; and the Lord ſhall cover him all the day long, and he ſhall dwell between his ſhoulders." *

The courſe in which Moſes proceeded in pronouncing the bleſſing, is ſuppoſed by ſome to be prophetically governed, according to the geographical deſcription of Canaan, and the order and courſe in which each portion was allotted to every ſeveral tribe. Benjamin, therefore, is addreſſed before his elder brother Joſeph, becauſe the lot of his inheritance was to lie between the lots of Judah and Joſeph, and to border upon each, and this, by conſulting the book of Joſhua, xviii. 11. you will find was the caſe. And we ſhall afterwards find many circumſtances concurring to give a diſtinction and a conſequence to Benjamin, among

* Deut. xxxiii. 12

the tribes of Iſrael. Jebus, that is Jeruſalem, fell to them. Of courſe, the ſeat of empire and of religion, in proceſs of time, was fixed in the midſt of them. Imperial Judah adminiſtered the affairs of government in a city belonging to another tribe, and from the day that the temple was built, not only the prieſts the ſons of Levi were called to miniſter in the order of their courſe, within the confines of their brother Benjamin; but all the males of all the tribes were obliged to appear before the Lord in the ſame place, at the three great ſtated feſtivals every year, beſides the innumerable occaſional viſits made to the metropolis of the whole country, as to the centre of civil government and of religious worſhip.

On comparing the arrangement of the precious ſtones in the breaſt-plate of the high-prieſt, with that of the ſame number and quality of gems which are repreſented as conſtituting the foundation of the new Jeruſalem, we find the *jaſper* ſtanding laſt, with the name of Benjamin engraved upon it, in the breaſt-plate; but the firſt in the foundation of the holy city, which is the type of the chriſtian church.

With the aid of Benjamin alone, Judah was enabled to ſupport an independent ſovereignty, which conſiderably outlaſted the kingdom of the ten tribes. This, and various other circumſtances, in the future hiſtory and condition of this tribe, explain the bleſſing of Moſes, which deſcribes him as "the beloved of the Lord," tenderly watched over and protected of Jehovah, as the progenitor of this tribe according to the fleſh was carefully kept at home, and affectionately cheriſhed by his father Jacob; as "dwelling in ſafety by him," that is, in confidence, in ſecurity, there being "none to make him afraid," to whom God was ſo nigh. There is apparently an alluſion to this, and a beautiful one, in the 48th Pſalm, from verſe 1 to 5. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praiſed, in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holineſs. Beautiful for ſituation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount

Mount Zion, on the ſides of the north, the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For lo, the kings were aſſembled, they paſſed by together. They ſaw it, and ſo they marvelled; they were troubled, and haſted away." "The Lord ſhall cover him," adds Moſes, "all day long." "*Cover.*" The Seventy tranſlate the word by one that ſignifies "to overſhadow." The Chaldean paraphraſe is, "he ſhall be a ſhield over him;" it denotes a ſecurity, covering or protection from evil; and the evangelical prophet, Iſaiah, beautifully expands the thought in theſe remarkable words, deſcriptive of and applied to the ſame object. "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her aſſemblies, a cloud and ſmoak by day, and the ſhining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory ſhall be a defence. And there ſhall be a tabernacle for a ſhadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from ſtorm and from rain."* "All day long," or "every day;" that is, continually. "And he ſhall dwell between his ſhoulders;" like the head, the glory of the natural body, rearing itſelf majeſtically between and upon "the ſhoulders," the ſtrength and power of the man. This was the bleſſing of Benjamin.

Moſes ſeems now to turn to a peculiarly favourite object; he ſeems to riſe above himſelf, the ſpirit of dying Jacob ſeems to revive in him. As if the name of Joſeph were the fire put to the train, he kindles, he blazes, he lightens. As if the name of Joſeph were the ſignal to be at once great and ſublime, tender and pathetic, approaching his ſtandard, recollecting the hiſtory and character of their illuſtrious progenitor, contemplating their riſing greatneſs and proſperity, he thus breaks out in ſtrains loftier than bard ever ſung. "Bleſſed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath; and for the precious fruits brought forth

* Iſai. iv. 5, 6,

forth by the ſun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the laſting hills. And for the precious things of the earth, and fulneſs thereof; and for the good will of him that dwelt in the buſh: let the bleſſing come upon the head of Joſeph, and upon the top of the head of him that was ſeparated from his brethren. His glory is like the firſtling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he ſhall puſh the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thouſands of Ephraim, and they are the thouſands of Manaſſeh."* Iſaac had but two ſons, and found himſelf exhauſted when he had beſtowed a bleſſing upon one of them; Jacob has twelve ſons, and yet he has a ſeveral bleſſing for each ſon. Iſrael at the death of Moſes was increaſed to an innumerable multitude, and yet there are bleſſings enough, and to ſpare, and yet there is room. And when God ſhall have brought back the captivity of Jacob, when God ſhall have brought his ancient people within the bond of the goſpel covenant, together with the fulneſs of the Gentile nations, the tide of benediction ſhall riſe, and riſe, and ſwell to the number and neceſſity of all the partakers. Thus the ſacred ſtream which Ezekiel ſaw in viſion, iſſuing from the threſhold of the houſe, was at firſt but a little bubbling fountain; but after a progreſs of a thouſand cubits, became "a brook of water up to the ancles;" after a thouſand more, had riſen to the height of the loins; and after a thouſand more, "the waters were riſen, waters to ſwim in, a river that could not be paſſed over."

To go into a detail of the particulars contained in the bleſſing of Joſeph, inſtead of occupying the place of an evening, might furniſh employment for years. I feel myſelf perfectly at a loſs how to repreſent it to your view; in what light firſt to conſider it, what particular part of it to bring forward—whether I ſhould

* Deut. xxxiii. 13—17.

ſhould at all preſume to attempt an illuſtration of it, or leave it altogether to your private meditation. Never, ſurely, in the ſame quantity of words were exhibited ſuch a multitude and variety of beautiful, ſtriking, and ſublime ideas. When Joſeph is to be bleſſed, the prophet for him arrays nature in her gayeſt, richeſt attire: for him he digs into the mine, and cleaves the flinty rock, and pours jewels and gold at his feet. "For him the roſes blow, for him diſtils the dew." For him golden harveſts wave in the fragrant air, and rivers of milk and oil flow down the mountains and through the vallies. For him the ſwelling cluſters of the vine aſſume a purple hue, the meadows clothe themſelves with verdure, and the cedars of God lift their proud heads to the ſkies; the ſun and moon, and eleven ſtars, do obeiſance to him. Nature is then animated, as it were, to do him honour, to give him protection, to extend his empire, to miniſter to his delight. The grove becomes vocal, the bullock treads ſtately through the plain, the unicorn puſhes with the horn, nations of enemies melt before him, the ten thouſands of Ephraim, and the thouſands of Manaſſeh, cultivate their fertile, peaceful fields, beautify their pleaſant villages, fortify their magnificent cities.

With inexhauſted ſtrength, with reſiſtleſs force, the prophet then hurries us out of the ſphere of nature, bears us to the awful regions of religion, places our feet on holy ground. It is the bleſſing of Joſeph, and we feel ourſelves tranſported to the wilderneſs of Horeb, we behold the buſh on fire, we hear the voice of God himſelf from the midſt of the flame. But though it ſpeaks from the midſt of fire, to the houſe of Joſeph it ſpeaks nothing but love, it is a fire that conſumes not, it breathes "good will." Moſes having thus as a poet touched every power of imagination, conducted us from one ſcene of delight to another, and made all Eden riſe to view; having, as a prophet, unveiled the world of ſpirits to our aſtoniſh-

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ed sight, and borne us as on eagle's wings up to the throne of God, gently deviates into his character of orator and historian, and sweetly re-descends with us into the field of Zoan, and calls forth a tender sigh from our bosom over the hapless youth who was torn from his father's embrace, and sold into slavery. "Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren."* But "who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"† Moses, my friends, seems reluctant to break off his subject, he is loth to bid Joseph farewel; as he goes he "casts a longing lingering look behind," and sighs out another blessing, after his tongue is silent. When Jacob speaks to Joseph, and Moses writes and speaks of him, neither of them knows how to leave off.

We soon find the prediction of Moses verified, and the parting benediction falling down, according to the letter of it, in copious showers upon the head of Joseph. For though half the tribe of Manasseh obtained an inheritance beyond Jordan, and a fair and spacious lot had fallen to the rest of the sons of Joseph in Canaan, they are soon under the necessity of applying to Joshua for an additional lot to enlarge their border. "And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto? And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood-country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel. And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh,

* Deut. xxxiii. 16. † Job xxxiii. 2.

ſeh, ſaying, Thou art a great people, and haſt great power: thou ſhalt not have one lot only. But the mountain ſhall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou ſhalt cut it down: and the out-goings of it ſhall be thine: for thou ſhalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be ſtrong."*

The Jewiſh writers take delight in expatiating upon the beauty and fruitfulneſs of the providentially allotted portion of this tribe. They repreſent Canaan as a garden, in compariſon to the reſt of the world, and Mount Ephraim with its adjacent plains as the garden of Canaan. But we muſt haſten from it, and attend our departing prophet, as he bids a ſhorter adieu to the remaining tribes.

As the lots of Zebulun and Iſſachar were to be contiguous in Canaan; as they were brothers german, being both ſons of Leah, and thereby had a nearer intereſt and affection among themſelves, and their tents were pitched contiguous to each other in the plains of Moab, Moſes addreſſes them as forming one body of people. "And of Zebulun he ſaid, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and Iſſachar in thy tents."† This is, with little variation, a repetition and confirmation of the bleſſing pronounced by dying Jacob. Zebulun the younger of the two brothers is in both preferred; and in diſtributing the lots Zebulun has the third lot, Iſſachar only the fourth. The inheritance of Zebulun was to be of a peculiar quality, and they were to draw their ſubſiſtence and wealth from ſources very different from thoſe of the reſt of Iſrael; they were to grow great by navigation and trade.

The ſea, that unruly element, was to be made tributary to them, and through it, a paſſage opened to them to the vaſt, populous and wealthy ſhores of Africa on the ſouth, and of Aſia and Europe on the north. "They ſhall ſuck of the abundance of the ſeas, and of

* Joſhua xvii. 14—18. † Deut. xxxiii. 18.

of treasures hid in the sand. They shall call the people unto the mountain, there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness."* The Chaldean applies these words peculiarly to Issachar, and translates them thus. "Rejoice Issachar, that is, be thou blessed in thy going to appoint the times of the solemn feasts of Israel," which has a reference to what we read of this tribe, 1 Chron. xii. 32. "And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do: the heads of them were two hundred, and all their brethren were at their commandment." This is generally understood of the times and seasons of the year, of the new moons and other appearances of the heavenly bodies, by which the solemn festivals were regulated, and which they of Issachar, by their astronomical observation and skill, calculated for the use of all Israel. Hence, they are represented in the blessing of Moses as calling the people "unto Mount Zion, where the temple was." Thus, we see every tribe had some separate and distinct province, some peculiar benefit and privilege, that in the commonwealth of Israel, as in the natural body, there might be no schism, nor the hand be able to say to the eye or to the foot, "I have no need of thee."

Moses advances to the tents of Gad with these words upon his tongue. "Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. And he provided the first part for himself, because there in a portion of the law-giver was he seated: and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel."† The enlargement of Gad may refer to his inheritance, which God hereby promised to extend, as he did that of Israel in general. "I will enlarge thy border;" or it may be understood of his person, and will then imply deliverance out of trouble, in which sense the word is used Psal. iv.

* Deut. xxxiii. 19. † Deut. xxxiii. 20, 21.

iv. 1. "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." If so, the words of Moses refer to the troubles of Gad, prophesied of by his dying father, and the history of the deliverance and enlargement of that tribe, from the hands of their enemies, by Jephtha the Gileadite. We read of Gadites in David's time, who were "mighty men of valour," whose faces were like the "faces of lions," and were "as swift as the roes upon the mountains." Hence he is said "to dwell as a lion, and to tear the arm with the crown of the head;" the emblems of sovereignty and strength, intimating that none should be so high or powerful, but the might of Gad should bring him down. The blessing in the 21st verse plainly refers to the provision already made for this tribe in conjunction with Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh, in the kingdoms of Og and Sihon. "And he provided the first part for himself, because there in a portion of the law-giver was he seated: and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel."*

The younger children of a numerous family, are to a stranger so many uninteresting, insignificant names; they have a mere family likeness, they speedily become undistinguishable, we mistake the one for the other. It is not so with the parents; they have distinguishing marks for each, they have a particular affection for every one; they have something to say to, to say of, every one. Thus Dan and Naphtali and Asher are to us so many words without a meaning; but in the eyes of Moses all have a special importance, each particular blessing has a special meaning, and the last is not the least in his affection. But as strangers we pass by the rest, and distinct ideas of only two or three of Judah and Levi, and Benjamin and Joseph, cleave to our memory; these we would know among ten thousand, these we can never forget.

We must now suppose Moses to have finished his round,

* Deut. xxxiii. 21.

round, to have returned to his place; and, cloſing the ſolemn ſcene with taking a general ſurvey of the whole, he riſes from the goodly tents of Iſrael, to the contemplation and acknowledgment of Iſrael's God, and he finally deſiſts from ſpeaking and acting, in rapturous admiration of Him in whom he lived, moved and breathed; he begins heaven on earth, by pouring out his ſoul in the boſom of the God of heaven and earth. "There is none like unto the God of Jeſhurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the ſky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlaſting arms: and he ſhall thruſt out the enemy from before thee, and ſhall ſay, Deſtroy them. Iſrael then ſhall dwell in ſafety alone; the fountain of Jacob ſhall be upon a land of corn and wine, alſo his heavens ſhall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Iſrael, who is like unto thee, O people, ſaved by the Lord, the ſhield of thy help, and who is the ſword of thy excellency! and thine enemies ſhall be found liars unto thee, and thou ſhalt tread upon their high places."*

—Moſes pronounced a bleſſing which he could not beſtow, which has long ago ſpent itſelf, the effects of which are no longer viſible. Chriſt led out his diſciples as far as to Bethany: "and he lifted up his hands, and bleſſed them."† He pronounced a bleſſing in his power to confer, which has not ſpent its force, which reaches into eternity: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you. And lo, *I am* with you always, even unto the end of the world."‡ Heaven and earth ſhall paſs away, but his word ſhall not paſs away, till all be fulfilled. "He ever liveth to make interceſſion for us." "All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth." What are the kingdoms of this

* Deut. xxxiii. 26—29. † Luke xxiv. 50.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

this world, and the glory of them? What is now the land which once flowed with milk and honey? Where are now "the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh?" The blessing even of Joseph has failed, and the beauty of Mount Ephraim is no more. But we receive from our greater prophet "a kingdom which cannot be moved: an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away." His benediction embraces a globe; extends from generation to generation; unites his second to his first coming; expands a new creation, "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" exalts guilty, fallen men to the dignity of the sons of God. Let him bless me, and I shall be blessed. Lord, lift thou upon me the light of thy countenance, and I shall be saved; breathe upon me, and I shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

—The blessing of Moses implied succession and change, contention and triumph; exhibited the "confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood," the exaltation of one on the depression of another: the blessing of Christ presents stability and permanency, harmony and peace, equality and acquiescence; exhibits only the noble contention of generous and affectionate spirits, the triumphs of benevolence; the spirit of adoption bursting from every lip, *Abba, Father*; the spirit of brotherly love glowing in every bosom, tuning the tongue to the law of kindness, beaming from the eye in looks of tenderness. A greater than Moses is with us: we "are not under the law, but under grace."

Hiſtory of Moſes.

LECTURE XI.

DEUTERONOMY XXXIV. 1—6.

And Moſes went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Piſgah, that is over againſt Jericho. And the Lord ſhewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manaſſeh, and all the land of Judah unto the utmoſt ſea, and the ſouth, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord ſaid unto him, This is the land which I ſware unto Abraham, unto Iſaac, and unto Jacob, ſaying, I will give it unto thy ſeed: I have cauſed thee to ſee it with thine eyes, but thou ſhalt not go over thither. So Moſes the ſervant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over againſt Beth-Peor: but no man knoweth of his ſepulchre unto this day.

WHEN ſtrangers accidentally meet to perform together the ſame voyage or journey, they are apt, at firſt, to regard each other with looks of caution and diſtruſt; they converſe ſparingly, and with reſerve; they conceal their views and purpoſes in their own breaſts; they attempt to dive into the characters and deſigns of their fellow-travellers. By degrees this ſuſpicious

ſuſpicious cautiouſneſs wears off; it becomes their mutual deſire and endeavour to pleaſe and oblige, they feel themſelves united by a common intereſt, their communications become frequent and free, they diſcover all that is in their hearts, they take a kind concern in each other's future fortunes, they exchange tokens of affection, they deviſe the means of coming together again, and part at length with regret. We ſeem, my brethren, to have been travelling through a vaſt country; we ſeem to have been converſing with men of a different age and region; we have contemplated many a fair proſpect, we have marked many ſucceſſive changes, and, at the end of another ſtage or two, we muſt ſeparate, and bid each other farewel. Like men acquainted and friendly, who know each other's meaning, and wiſh each other's happineſs, we look back to our common pilgrimage with ſome degree of ſatisfaction, and forward, I truſt, with ſome degree of deſire to meet together again. The mutual token which, in the mean time, we ſhall carry with us to ſtir up our minds by way of remembrance, is one that touches the heart by more than one ſpring, the memory of a dear and eſtimable common friend, who has contributed much to our pleaſure and improvement, who was lovely and pleaſant in life, and in death fills the ſoul with admiration and regret; but whom we have the felicity of conſidering as having only preceded us a little in a journey, on which we too have already entered, and the end of which will bring us to the ſame home with him.

The pen has now dropt from the hand of Moſes, and ſilent is his tongue; and another, not himſelf, muſt tell us what he is, and how he died. Every ſcene in the life of this illuſtrious man is ſingular, and inſtructive as ſingular; and his latter end is not the leaſt intereſting and uſeful. He had now completed his one hundred and twentieth year, without having become ſubject to the uſual infirmities of that advanced age. It is one thing to live long, and another to be

be old. We frequently ſee old age commenced by many woful ſymptoms, long before the man has begun to live at all: and we ſometimes ſee the wiſdom and piety of grey hairs giving luſtre to the bloom of youth, and tempering the vivacity of the morning of life. We wiſh to live long, but we weakly aſſociate what never met, except in Moſes and a favoured few like him, perfect ſoundneſs of faculties and the capacity of enjoying life, united to length of days and richneſs of experience. We wiſh to live long, but fail to reflect on dimneſs of eyes, decay of memory, waſting of ſtrength, loſs of appetite, the neglect or unkindneſs of friends, and the other concomitants of that forlorn period. We wiſh to live long, but if the days come we find them evil; when theſe wiſhed-for years draw nigh we are conſtrained to acknowledge "we have no pleaſure in them." The few, the very few exceptions the hiſtory of mankind furniſhes, from the general rule, ſerve only the more grievouſly to confirm it. Happy would it be for old men, however, happy for themſelves, and moſt happy for others, though they cannot retain at pleaſure the clear-ſightedneſs and vigour of Moſes, did they cultivate as they ought, and acquire as they might, ſomething of his meekneſs and gentleneſs and condeſcenſion; they would not have ſuch frequent reaſon to complain of the petulance, ſelf-ſufficiency and preſumption of young men, if they themſelves would learn to be leſs peeviſh, and obſtinate, and overbearing. For, bad as the world is, age will obtain reſpect, unleſs it take pains to provoke inſult and diſreſpect.

The death of Moſes, then, was not in the ordinary courſe of nature, it was not preceded by its uſual harbingers, it was not occaſioned by a failure of the radical moiſture, by the ſtroke of violence, or the malignity of diſeaſe, but by a ſimple act of the will of God. Wherefore, then, "ſhould it be thought a thing incredible that God ſhould raiſe the dead?" When we ſee the antediluvian patriarchs living to one thouſand

thouſand years, the eye of Moſes, at one hundred and twenty, not dim, nor his natural force abated, and "Chriſt, the firſt fruits," burſting aſunder the bars of the grave; have we not ſo many concurring preſumptions and proofs of immortality and the reſurrection. And what muſt be the angelic beauty, the celeſtial vigour, the undecaying luſtre and glory of bodies "faſhioned like to Chriſt's glorious body," when we ſee the face of Moſes ſhine, that it could not be ſtedfaſtly looked at, and preſerving to life's extremity the morning dew of youth? The honour put on Moſes was rare and ſingular, but the glory to be revealed is a bleſſedneſs of which all the redeemed of the Lord ſhall partake.

When the ſummons arrived for Aaron to prepare for death, Moſes, his brother, and Eleazer, his ſon and ſucceſſor, were commanded to aſcend the mountain with him, and to aſſiſt in the ſolemnities of the awful change: but Moſes advances alone to meet death, to meet his God. The holy veſtments, with the office to which they appertained, deſcended from father to ſon, and were at length done away altogether and loſt; but the moral and ſpiritual parts of the diſpenſation never waxed old, could not ſee corruption, but like God, their author, were unchangeable; and like Moſes, by whom they were delivered to the world, unenfeebled by length of time, continued till Chriſt, the reſtorer of all things, interwove them with the tiſſue of the goſpel, and conferred immortality upon them.

—We muſt now look back to the ſentence of death pronounced againſt Moſes, and to the crime which provoked the irreverſible doom: "And the Lord ſpake unto Moſes that ſelf-ſame day, ſaying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over againſt Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Iſrael for a poſſeſſion, and die in the mount whither thou goeſt up;

and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in Mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel."* Here many things concur to surprise and instruct us. The offence of Moses seems a venial one; he erred merely through hastiness of spirit; and had he not good cause to be angry? He was not often so overtaken, he quickly repented, and recovered tranquillity and self-government again. He repeatedly attempted to soften justice by submission and entreaty; he asked for nothing unreasonable or absurd: he wished merely to be a witness of the divine bounty, truth and faithfulness; infinitely greater offenders had at his entreaty been forgiven and restored. But justice relented not, Moses for one offence must die; the grace which he often obtained for others is to himself denied. Let the wretch loaded with a thousand crimes black as hell, and malignant as the spirit that reigns in the children of disobedience, think of this and tremble. That "fool makes a mock of sin." "Father, forgive him, he knows not what he does." One transgression excluded Moses from Canaan; and with so many imperfections on his head, loaded with so many crimes of a nature so vile and atrocious, can he think of entering into the kingdom of heaven? When we see such inflexible and unrelenting severity pursuing the dearest and most distinguished of God's children, who shall dare to think or to call any sin a little one? Who shall presume on mercy, who shall dream of washing away his guilt by the tears of penitence, who shall harden himself against God and hope to prosper? The great crime in the sight of God is, giving that glory to another which belongeth to him. For

* Deut. xxxii. 48—52.

For this Moses died without remedy, from the consequence of this he could not escape, though he sought it carefully, and with tears.

The character of Moses comes near to perfection, but it is not faultless; he too, with the *guiltiest*, stands in need of pardon and atonement; and when "righteousness is laid to the line and judgment to the plummet," his life must pay the forfeit. Moses therefore could not be a saviour to others; had his conduct been perfectly pure, it had been still but the righteousness of a man, it could but have delivered his own soul, it could have merited nothing at the hands of a holy God. In order to constitute a saviour for the guilty, to unspotted purity of moral character must be superadded divinity of nature, to give efficacy and virtue to suffering, and value to the shedding of blood. Thus the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; "and what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."* We flee to thee, blessed Jesus, to cover us in the day of wrath; thy blood cleanseth from all sin; by the deeds of the law we cannot be justified, we look for redemption from the curse, through thy meritorious death and righteousness, "for the forgiveness of all our sins, according to the riches of thy grace."

But though death was to Moses a mark of the divine displeasure, and the punishment of sin; like all the chastenings of fatherly wisdom, like all the punishments of Heaven, it was in the issue, and upon the whole, a real benefit, it was unspeakably great gain: it relieved him of a burthen sometimes ready to prove intolerable, it introduced him to communion with God more intimate and endearing than ever he had hitherto enjoyed; it placed him among the spirits of just men made perfect. Moses died in sight of the promised land, was permitted to measure it with his

* Rom. viii. 3.

eye, and to judge of its fertility from specimens of its produce; and all that the labours and light of those who are fellow-workers with Moses can do, is to repeat the promise, to point with the finger and to say, "This is the way, walk ye in it." It belongs to another power to subdue corruption, to divide Jordan, to level the walls of proud Jericho.

We know the offence, we have heard the doom, the reprieve is expired, the warrant of death is signed, the day of execution is come. But the bitterness of death is over already, the sting of death is plucked out, and even the word that condemns and kills the body, is a word of love. A worldly mind cannot discern the reason why the cross is the way, why death is in the cup, why the entrance into the kingdom of God is through the thorny road of much tribulation; but the child of God, the disciple of Jesus, has ceased from himself and from his own will and understanding: "He knows whom he has believed," and who has said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:" he sees death in the list of his privileges and possessions, and is assured that all shall work together for his good.

Moses has fulfilled like a hireling his day, has written, has spoken, has judged, has prayed, has blessed; the business of life is ended; he has glorified God on earth, it only remains that he glorify him, by submission to his sovereign will, in dying. Behold him then solitarily and solemnly advancing to encounter the last enemy: he has passed through the plain, and again he begins to climb up into the mount to meet God. The eyes of all Israel are rivetted to his footsteps. Who is not ready to cry out, "Would to God I could die for thee." Every step he advances plants a dagger in the heart. The distance begins to render vision indistinct, his person is diminished to a speck, they fondly imagine they see him still, the eyes strain for another and another glimpse, they are suffused with tears, they can behold him no more. But

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he ſtill beholds their goodly tents, he ſees all Iſrael collected into one point of view: Jehovah dwelling in the midſt of his people, the tabernacle with the pillar of cloud reſting upon it: his affection with his ſight is concentered on the happy ſpot, his whole ſoul goes out in one general departing bleſſing. As he aſcends, the proſpect expands and brightens to his raviſhed eye. He can trace Jordan from its ſource, till it falls into the ſea; he wanders with delight from hill to hill, from plain to plain. He ſees on this ſide Mount Lebanon loſing its lofty head in the clouds; on that, the ocean and the ſky meeting together to terminate his view. Beneath his feet, as it were, the city of palm-trees, and the happy fields which the poſterity of Joſeph were deſtined to inhabit. The land which Abraham had meaſured with his foot in the length and in the breadth of it; in which Iſaac and Jacob had ſojourned as ſtrangers; which God had fenced, and cultivated, and planted, and enriched by the hand of the Canaanite for his beloved people; which the ſun irradiated with milder beams, the dew of heaven refreſhed with ſweeter moiſture, and the early and the latter rain fattened in more copious ſhowers. "And the Lord ſaid unto him, This is the land which I ſware unto Abraham, unto Iſaac, and unto Jacob, ſaying, I will give it unto thy ſeed: I have cauſed thee to ſee it with thine eyes, but thou ſhalt not go over thither."*

But what is the glory of this world? It paſſeth away. What is the felicity of man, who muſt die, and of the ſon of man, who is a worm? It cometh quickly to a period. The eye which age had not made dim, muſt nevertheleſs be cloſed in death at length; the ſtrength which a hundred and twenty years had not been able to impair, is in a moment by one touch of the finger of God diſſolved; the heart which God and Iſrael had ſo long divided, is now wholly occupied with God. In the midſt of a viſion ſo

* Deut. xxxiv. 4.

so divine, Moses gently falls asleep: and he who falls asleep in the bosom of a father, needs be under no anxiety about his awakening. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord."* Moses died with Canaan full in view, enjoying every thing but possession; and the utmost that his dispensation can do, is to ascertain the existence of the heavenly country; to describe its boundaries, nature and situation; to conduct to its limits, and to put us under the conduct of the great Captain of salvation.

When we see the prophet of the law so far from having power to introduce others into their promised rest, that he himself could not enter in because of unbelief; we are admonished to court the protection and assistance of a more potent arm; to cleave to Him, who, by dying, has overcome death, and Him who has the power of death; "who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth."

But oh, what a blessed transition! from the fairest earthly prospect that eye ever beheld, to the enjoyment of a fairer inheritance, eternal in the heavens; from the tents of Jacob, to the encampment of angels under Michael their prince; from a glory confined and transitory, to glory unbounded, unchangeable; from the symbol of the divine presence, in a pillar of fire and cloud, to his real presence, where there is "fulness of joy," and where "there are pleasures for evermore;"† to see him as he is, and to be transformed into the same image from glory to glory. Behold Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, rushing from their thrones to welcome to the realms of light the shepherd of Israel, who had led the chosen seed from strength to strength, from triumph to triumph, while the voice of the Eternal himself proclaims, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

But

* Deut. xxxiv. 5. † Psal. xvi. 11.

But we muſt deſcend from this exceeding high mountain, and inquire after the breathleſs clay of the ſervant of the Lord. It is precious in the ſight of God; not a particle of it ſhall be loſt in the grave, and it ſhall be raiſed up at the laſt day. In every other inſtance he leaves the dead to bury their dead; but he charges himſelf with the body of Moſes, performs himſelf the rites of ſepulture, conveys it by the miniſtration of angels, from the top of Nebo to a tomb of his own providing, "in a valley in the land of Moab, over againſt Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his ſepulchre unto this day."*

The reaſon commonly aſſigned for concealing the place where Moſes was interred, was to prevent a ſuperſtitious uſe of his tomb and relics, which a people ſo prone to idolatry might readily have adopted, and with as good a colour of reaſon at leaſt as the votaries of any hero, prince or ſaint that ever was deified, could ever allege for their conduct. The ſcripture ſaith expreſsly, that, at the time this concluſion of the book of Deuteronomy was written, whether by Joſhua, his immediate ſucceſſor, by Samuel, three hundred and fifty years afterwards, or by Ezra, after the diſſolution of the monarchy, and the Babyloniſh captivity, that then the place of Moſes's burial was unknown to any man, and had been ſo from the beginning; and yet ſuch is the wickedneſs of impoſture on the one hand, and the fondneſs of credulity on the other, that ſo late as the year of our Lord 1655, a pretended diſcovery of the ſpot was made, and attempted to be impoſed upon the world.

The outlines of the ſtory are as follows: "Certain ſhepherds who were feeding their goats on the mountains of Nebo and Abarim, obſerved that ſome of their charge were in uſe to diſappear, and were abſent for ſeveral days together; and that upon their return to the flock, their hair was perfumed with ſomething that ſmelled extremely ſweet. This excited their curioſity, and

* Deut. xxxiv. 6.

and determined them to inveſtigate the affair with the utmoſt accuracy. They accordingly traced their goats, and were led by them through rugged and rocky places to a little vale, where, upon examination, they diſcovered a kind of cave, out of which proceeded a very agreeable ſmell, reſembling that which the goats conveyed on their fleeces, and had firſt ſuggeſted the inquiry. In the middle of the cave they found a tomb of ſtone, on which certain characters were engraven, which, being illiterate, they could not decypher; but they ſoon perceived that the ſweet ſmell was communicated to their perſons and garments. Upon this they went immediately to Mataxat, patriarch of the Maronites, who reſided at the monaſtery of St. Mary, on Mount Lebanon, and related to him the particulars of their diſcovery. The fragrance that ſtill adhered to their clothes confirming their teſtimony, he ſent two of his monks with them; one of them, a man of profound erudition, named Aben-Uſeph, who found, in the place pointed out to them, a monument inſcribed with theſe words in Hebrew, MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD. The patriarch, tranſported with joy at a diſcovery ſo marvellous, beſought *Morat*, Pacha of Damaſcus, to conſtitute him ſole guardian of the ſepulchre. But the Greeks and Arminians, as well as the Franciſcan friars, and after them the Jews, violently oppoſed it, and, unable to agree, tried by dint of intereſt at court, by preſents to the Mufti and Grand Viſier, to appropriate each to themſelves the ſuperintendence of this tomb, which they equally believed to be that of Moſes, and which the Jews, with peculiar earneſtneſs, inſiſted muſt belong to them. They repreſented that, among all the poſſeſſions of the Grand Signor, none could be more valuable and illuſtrious than the property of three ſepulchres ſo renowned as that of Mahomet at Mecca, of Jeſus Chriſt at Jeruſalem, and of Moſes in Mount Nebo. But the Jeſuits had the addreſs, by preſents happily applied, to defeat the claims of

of all theſe pretenders, and to obtain an order for ſhutting up the ſepulchre, and obſtructing the road that led to it; nay, for prohibiting all acceſs to it, under pain of death. They were meanwhile forming a deſign of ſecretly conveying off the body of Moſes, which they flattered themſelves would prove a conſiderable acceſſion of reſpectability, and a new ſource of wealth to their order. Having, however, with much difficulty and danger, penetrated into the ſepulchre, it was found entirely empty; no body, no relics appeared." * Theſe pleaſing chimeras vaniſhed almoſt as ſoon as formed; for a learned Rabbin proved that the perſon interred in this tomb, was not the ancient legiſlator of the Hebrews, but a modern Jew of the ſame name.

The ſacred hiſtory ſays, that Moſes died the fortieth year after the deliverance from Egypt, and the moſt part of the Jewiſh writers fix the day of his death to the ſeventh day of the laſt month of that year, or the month Adar; and our learned and pious countryman, archbiſhop Uſher, calculates it to have happened on the firſt day of the ſame month.

There is a paſſage in the New Teſtament which refers to this event, and which has greatly exerciſed the labour and ingenuity of critics and commentators: it is in the general epiſtle of Jude, where that diſciple, in reproving the raſhneſs and licentiouſneſs of certain heretics, "who deſpiſe dominion, and ſpeak evil of dignities," quotes an example of very high authority, as condemning the practice: "Yet," ſays he, "Michael the arch-angel, when, contending with the devil, he diſputed about the body of Moſes, durſt not bring againſt him a railing accuſation, but ſaid, The Lord rebuke thee." †

Now, as many queſtions almoſt as words have been ſtarted on this ſubject: what is an arch-angel; and who is Michael? How came the body of Moſes to be a ground

* Hornius, Secul. XVII. Art. XXXII. p. 536.

† Jude 9.

a ground of controversy between him and the devil, what were they severally aiming at, and what was the issue of their quarrel? What authority restrained Michael from preferring a railing accusation against him, how his conduct comes to be adduced as a pattern of self-government, and a reproof of the vices of the tongue? And from what source did Jude derive his knowledge of this transaction? The very mention of so many, some of them, on the first glance, unimportant questions, will, I doubt not, check curiosity altogether, instead of exciting it. It is evident, that the death and burial of Moses interested heaven and earth and hell; that many historical facts of great moment are purposely left unrecorded; that many discoveries are reserved for that great and notable day of the Lord, when God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil; that it becomes not us to be wise above what is written, but to rest in hope, that "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter." This much we know, that, about fifteen hundred years after, Moses appeared in glory ("whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth") to do homage to his Saviour on the mount of transfiguration, and to lay his glory at the feet of him in whose light he shone; and we know "the hour is coming when all who are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."*

Such was the latter end of, "take him for all in all," the greatest mere man that ever existed. But I check myself. It is impossible to do any thing like justice to such a character in a few moments discourse: you will indulge me with another hearing on this subject; I mean, to preach a funeral sermon: the only one I ever undertook without pain, over a character and a memory to which no eloquence can rise, no detail do

* John v. 28, 29.

do juſtice; in celebrating which, praiſe cannot degenerate into panegyric, nor the preacher be ſuſpected of adulation.

Moſes died in the year of the world two thouſand five hundred and fifty-three,—before Chriſt one thouſand four hundred and fifty,—after the flood eight hundred and ninety-ſeven. The moſt ancient and authentic of hiſtorians, the moſt penetrating, dignified, and illuminated of prophets, the profoundeſt, sageſt of legiſlators, the prince of orators and poets, the moſt excellent and amiable of men, the firmeſt and faithfulleſt of believers. "Whether we live, let us live unto the Lord," that when we die we may "die in the Lord;" that "living and dying we may be the Lord's."

History of Moſes.

LECTURE XII.

DEUTERONOMY XXXIV. 10—12.

And there aroſe not a prophet ſince in Iſrael like unto Moſes, whom the Lord knew face to face: in all the ſigns and the wonders which the Lord ſent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his ſervants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moſes ſhewed in the ſight of all Iſrael.

THERE is in mankind a good-natured diſpoſition to ſpare the dead. Without very high provocation indeed, who could think of diſturbing the peace and ſilence of the grave, and of dragging again before the tribunal of man thoſe who have already undergone the more awful judgment of a righteous God?

But this generoſity does not always proceed from pure benevolence. The dead no longer ſtand in our way; they are no longer our rivals in the purſuits of fame or of fortune. We can here earn the praiſe of magnanimity, without any danger of ſuffering in the intereſts of our reputation, our conſequence, our ſelf-love. From whatever ſource this lenity and forbearance proceed, we would not be thought altogether to condemn them; but good-nature in this, as in a few other caſes, is apt ſometimes to be carried too far. Through fear of being thought ſevere to thoſe who have

have no power to defend themselves, extravagant and unmerited commendation has been often lavished on the worthless and the wicked. I will cheerfully engage not to violate the ashes of the dead by unjust censure, nor even by merited invective; but I must not be forced, on the other hand, to commemorate virtues that were never practised; to bring to light worth that never existed, except in the tropes of a funeral oration; to represent as right, what God, and truth, and reason pronounce to be wrong. My tongue shall be silent as the grave over the memory of the proudest, most selfish, hard-hearted, unkind, uncomplying wretch that ever lived; but I must not be called in to prostitute my conscience by celebrating his humility, generosity, compassion, or sweetness of temper. I would correct the common adage a little, and then give it all the currency in my power. Instead of rendering it, "of the dead say that only which is *good*," I would translate it, "of the dead say that only which is *true*."

Indeed, the best thing that can befal most men, when they die, is to be forgotten as soon as possible. Few, very few characters are such as not to suffer by handling; and there is great danger of rousing and provoking slumbering resentments against our departed friends, by an officious zeal to trumpet their praise, and display their good qualities. The praise bestowed on the dead is generally contemptible adulation to the living; adulation, vilely bestowing the rewards of piety and goodness on mere greatness or affluence, and thereby strengthening the hands of vice, by lulling the conscience to rest, and deceiving men into the belief, that a good name may be purchased without possessing a spark of virtue.

The liturgy of our established church, in how many other respects soever useful and excellent, is here faulty, and certainly does mischief. The funeral service, one of the noblest, because one of the most scriptural parts of it, with indiscriminating charity dispenses

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the kingdom of heaven to the evil and the good, to "him that ſweareth as to him who feareth an oath." The wretch whoſe whole life has been a notorious violation of every law human and divine, who grew old in hatred and contempt of the goſpel, falls aſleep in the "ſure and certain hope of a reſurrection to eternal life." What is this but to encourage men to continue in ſin, that grace may abound; to live profligates, and yet hope to die in peace?

Happily, the character we are this evening to bring under your review will ſtand the teſt of the ſtricteſt examination, will ſhine with ſuperior luſtre from being touched and retouched, will diſcover new excellencies on every inveſtigation, will furniſh to the humble, the penitent, and the believing, perpetual ground of inſtruction and conſolation. After a courſe of more than fourſcore Lectures on the life, character, and writings of Moſes, it may perhaps be thought ſuperfluous, to employ the whole of another diſcourſe in attempting to elucidate his character, to recommend his example, to embalm his memory. But it is this very circumſtance which determined me to attempt a delineation of this wonderful man's portrait, to requeſt that you would join me in meditating a few moments over one who has been honoured of God, to do more, in order to pleaſe and inſtruct mankind, than any mere man that ever exiſted. To ſay truth, I conſider the perſon of Moſes as a pledge of affection between you and myſelf. He brought us together at firſt, and he has kept us together a conſiderable part of theſe three years paſt; to part with him and his writings ſeems a kind of preſentiment of our final diſſolution likewiſe; and, in loſing him, I feel as if I were loſing a thouſand friends at a ſtroke. But let us ſpeak and think of Moſes, not of ourſelves.

It is impoſſible to think of Moſes without firſt thinking of "his Father and our Father, of his God and our God." To be a choſen inſtrument in the hand of Heaven to carry on the plans of Providence, to promote

promote the wisdom and the happiness of mankind, is man's highest glory; as it is his truest felicity to do this voluntarily and from the heart, as an obedient, zealous, and cheerful fellow-worker with God. Now, Moses possessed this distinction and felicity in a very eminent degree. God raised up Pharaoh "in very deed for this cause, to shew in him his power, that his great name might be declared throughout all the earth;" and Pharaoh, unhappily for himself, accomplished the designs of Heaven, by his pride, obstinacy and rebellion. God called "Cyrus his anointed, by name, and surnamed him who had not known him, for Jacob his servant's sake, and Israel his elect." Nebuchadnezzar he employed as the rod of his anger to chastise a disobedient and gainsaying people, and then broke it in pieces and dashed it to the ground. These, and many others, stand upon record, as executing the will of the Eternal without their own consciousness or intention, nay, totally against it; but Moses had the rare felicity of engaging in one of the most generous purposes which can animate a human breast, knowing it to be, at the same time, the leading, commanding purpose of God himself. Every step he moved was supported by the enlivening reflection, that every step he moved was executing the decrees of the Almighty, and promoting the relief and salvation of his wretched countrymen. How delightful the progress, when duty and inclination go hand in hand!

The circumstances in which God raised up Moses mark him peculiarly as his own. Every thing concurred to prove, that here "the arm of the Lord was revealed." Another king had arisen, "who knew not Joseph," the hope of Israel seemed to be perishing; Egypt was alarmed with expectation, or rather apprehension, of the appearance of this wonderful child; Israel was awakened to expectation, but abandoned it in despair. To reach the life of one, ten thousand innocents perish by the sword. But, as if in

defiance

defiance of the precautions of human wisdom, Moses is born in the very rage of that persecution which threatened his life. The daughter of Pharaoh becomes his protector, and Egyptian Magi vie with each other in rearing that genius, whose ascendant threatened the downfall of their country; and Moses is become great, before the world apprehends that it is he by whose hand God would deliver his people from bondage.

This brings us forward to the period when his personal character began plainly to unfold itself; and it discovers to us a mind superior to every mean, every selfish gratification. Men love to adopt the cause that prevails; and the cause of Israel was at that time low indeed. At a certain period of life passion bears unlimited sway. At forty, the calls of ambition and pride are loudest; and they who are themselves at ease are little disposed to embark in the miseries of others. But in Moses behold a man, not sunk into poverty violently obtruded upon him, but poverty deliberately chosen; a man of forty relinquishing, without reluctance or regret, the pleasures, riches and honours of a court, and exchanging them for the labour and oppression of an Israelitish slave, and glorying in the reproachful name of Hebrew, much more than in that of "the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Behold the manly indignation of a noble spirit hastening to avenge wretchedness and depression of insolence and cruelty, and in the punishment of one oppressor exhibiting an anticipated view of that great deliverance which, in process of time, God was by him to work in behalf of a whole people.

The same spirit which beheld Egyptian oppression with just resentment, beheld discord among brethren with godly sorrow and regret. He boldly exposed his life to repel the one; in the spirit of meekness he tried to heal the other; and he very early experienced the ungracious, and ungrateful, and discouraging requital of services the most kindly intended; the sad

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presage of that life of mortification unparalleled, and most unmerited, which he was afterwards called to endure. The insolent retort of an unkind brother awakened prudence, and put him for a season to flight; for valour, as the case then stood, valour against such fearful odds, could not have deserved the name of courage, but of rashness.

Providence still directs his path, and conducts him at once to usefulness and happiness. It seems as if the all-wise Jehovah meant to display in Moses an example of the great and of the petty virtues, the virtues of the man, of the citizen, and of the believer united; and in none of his future exploits, perhaps, is he more amiable and more estimable than in protecting the virgin daughters of Jethro from the violence of their rough and surly neighbours. Here we behold again on what delicate hinges the great God turns round the affairs of men. This piece of natural, honest, commendable gallantry, introduces Moses to the acquaintance of a prince, lays the foundation of an important alliance for life, and influences all his future fortunes, and feelings, as a man.

Hence we are conducted to the delicious, the calm, the contemplative period of our hero's mortal existence. We behold a simple shepherd tending a flock not his own, but enjoying tranquillity and contentment; secluded from the society of men, but blessed with the visions of the Almighty; losing himself in sweet oblivion of a busy, bustling world, awake only to the innocent joys of domestic life, and the sublimer pleasures of religion. It was in all probability in this delightful retreat, during this blessed interval of retirement from and unconnectedness with what passed on the great theatre, that, divinely taught, he sung "how the heavens and earth rose out of chaos." It was then and there that the Divine Spirit disclosed to his astonished, his enraptured eye, the years beyond the flood, the spring-season of nature, the first man whom God created upon the earth, the amiableness of

pure primeval innocence, the glories of paradise, the unlimited bounty of indulgent Heaven: It was then and there, that good Spirit put the pen into his hand, to trace that sacred record, which has descended to us for our delight and instruction, and which shall remain, till time expire, the wonder, the monitor, the guide of mankind unto all manner of truth.

What a happy period for the human race! how happy for himself. Were the will of man to prevail, who would exchange such a retirement as this, for the noise and glare which captivates fools? But men, such as Moses, are not made for themselves alone; and ill would he have improved the blessings of solitude, had he not learned in it, cheerfully to sacrifice his own humour and his own ease to the work and glory of God.

The time to favour Israel was now come, and Moses must think of privacy and self-enjoyment no longer. By a vision, such as might appal the boldest, and encourage the most fearful, he is remanded to Egypt with a commission, under the seal of Heaven, to haughty Pharaoh, and he fears no more the wrath of a king.

But we have insensibly deviated into the history of Moses, instead of delineating his character. Are they not, however, one and the same thing? To know what he was, we have but to consider what he said, and how he acted. But how is it possible to comprise, within the bounds of one discourse, a detail of forty active, busy years, from the day that God appeared to him in a flame of fire in the bush, to the day of his ascending to the top of Mount Nebo to die? In general, they contain a display of almost every human shining virtue, brought forward to the eye, and impressed on the heart, by their most lovely foil, modesty, meekness and humility. What magnanimity! united to what coolness and self-government! what firmness and intrepidity! what patience and gentleness! what consummate wisdom! what amiable simplicity!

plicity! in youth, in maturity, in old age; in public and in private life; in every relation and condition, who is like him, who deſerves to be compared with him? In forming an idea of human excellence, Moſes preſents himſelf immediately to my view; it is no longer an idea, it is a delightful reality.

The more attentive part of my hearers will obſerve that, to complete the propoſed plan of this diſcourſe, there is ſtill wanting the general leading idea of all theſe diſcourſes, the reſemblance between the type and the perſon typified—the analogy of Moſes and Chriſt. This I refer to another Lecture; and beg leave to ſubjoin, as a proper ſequel to this, the following elogium of Moſes, tranſlated from the works of an eloquent critic of his writings.*

ELOGIUM OF MOSES.

"This moſt extraordinary perſonage was preſented to the world in very ſingular circumſtances. He appeared at a period of peculiar affliction to his kindred and nation; and Divine Providence ſeems to have raiſed him up expreſsly for the purpoſe of exemplifying virtues, which diſtreſs and perſecution alone are calculated to place in the faireſt point of light. By a ſeries of miraculous events he eſcaped, in infancy, the fatal effects of a ſanguinary decree, which doomed to death all the male children of the Hebrews, from the womb. And, what highly merits conſideration, and ſerves ſtrikingly to diſplay the influence which Sovereign Wiſdom exerciſes over all the affairs of men, he owed his preſervation, in a great meaſure, to perſons whoſe intereſt it was to have deſtroyed him. Theſe very perſons aſſiſted in forming that ſuperior genius, and in cultivating thoſe wonderful talents, which, in time, qualified him to be the deliverer of a nation which it was their intention utterly to extirpate.

* Diſcours Hiſt. Critiques, &c. ſur les Evenemens memorables du vieux Teſtament. par JAQUES SAURIN, Tome I. Diſcours LXX.

"Scarcely arrived at that ſtage of life when men begin to form plans for the remainder of their exiſtence, he feels himſelf called to determine between two objects, ſo incompatible in their nature, that the matureſt judgment can with difficulty hold the balance even; religion and worldly intereſt. Under the neceſſity of making a choice ſo difficult, he riſes above his age, above his paſſions, nay, in ſome ſenſe, above humanity, and nobly ſacrifices every worldly proſpect to religion. He reſolves to partake in the miſeries of an oppreſſed people, in order to ſecure an intereſt in the favour of that God who is continually watching over his children, even when he ſeems to have abandoned them to their perſecutors; he values nothing in compariſon with that favour; he prizes it infinitely more than that of a great king, nay, more than the proſpect itſelf of being heir to a throne and kingdom; and, according to the expreſſion of St. Paul, *Eſteemed the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the treaſures of Egypt.*"*

"Not ſatisfied with being a ſpectator and a partaker of the miſery of his wretched brethren, he reſolves to meet the torrent; and, of a witneſs, haſtens to become the avenger of the tyranny under which they groaned. Obſerving one of the mercileſs tools of oppreſſion abuſing an Iſraelite, he braves the rigour of all the laws of Egypt, kills the oppreſſor, delivers the ſufferer, and, as we have ſaid in another place, performs an anticipated act of the *deliverer of his country.*

"Prudence conſtrains him to withdraw from the danger which threatened the ſtranger who dared to ſhed the blood of an Egyptian. He retires into the land of Midian, and there experiences repeated proofs of the care of that miraculous Providence which accompanied him through the whole courſe of a long life. Cut off from every opportunity of diſplaying the qualities of the hero, he exhibits thoſe of the philoſopher.

* Heb. xi. 26.

philosopher. He employs the calmness of that retreat in contemplating the divine perfections; or rather, in this delicious retirement it was, that he enjoyed the intimate communications of the Almighty, who inspired him, and appointed him to the high destination of laying the first foundations of revealed religion, which was to supply the defects of that of nature, already clouded and disfigured by the prejudices and the passions of mankind. He composed the book of Genesis; and thereby furnished the world with irresistible arms to combat idolatry. He attacks the two most extravagant errors into which the human race had fallen, the plurality of gods, and that which admits imperfection in the Deity. To the one, and the other, he opposes the doctrine of the unity of an all-perfect Being.

"That GOD, whose existence and attributes he thus published, was pleased to manifest himself to him in Mount Horeb, in a manner altogether singular and miraculous. He confers on this chosen servant, the glorious but formidable commission, to take the field against Pharaoh, to stem the current of oppression, to attempt to mollify the tyrant; and, if persuasion failed, to employ force, to support arguments by prodigies, to exact from all Egypt the expiation of those barbarities which she had dared to exercise upon a people distinguished as the object of his tenderest love, and of his most illustrious miracles.

"This appointment Moses presumes to decline; but from a spirit of humility rather than of disobedience. He could not conceive it possible that, at the age of fourscore, and labouring under a defect of speech, he could be the person qualified to address a mighty prince, and overturn a whole kingdom. The appointment is a second time pressed upon him; a second time he refuses it. At length, however, his reluctance is overcome; and filled with that Spirit which animated him to the conflict, he enters on the career of glory which was presented to him, and his

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firſt victory is a victory over himſelf. He tears himſelf from the delights of the land of Midian; he quits the houſe of a father-in-law, by whom he was moſt tenderly beloved, to encounter a hoſt of enemies and executioners.

"He arrives in Egypt. He preſents himſelf before Pharaoh: he entreats; he threatens; he draws down upon the Egyptians plagues the moſt tremendous. He departs from that kingdom, at the head of a people which had endured in it cruelties the moſt unexampled. The tyrant purſues him, gains ground, preſſes hard upon him. Behold him encompaſſed on every ſide, by a vaſt and invincible army, by a ridge of inacceſſible mountains, and by the waters of the Red Sea. He rebukes the roaring billows; they inſtantly become obedient to the man whom the DEITY has made, (if the expreſſion be lawful) the depoſitary of his power. *The waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left*,* as the ſacred hiſtorian expreſſes himſelf. Moſes advances into the wilderneſs, and, by a continuation of miraculous interpoſition, he beholds thoſe very waters which had divided, to favour the paſſage of Iſrael, cloſing again, and ſwallowing up Pharaoh, his court, and his hoſt.

"Delivered, in appearance, from his moſt formidable enemies, he ſoon finds he has to maintain a laſting conflict with foes ſtill more formidable, the very people whom he conducted. He diſcovers in theſe degenerate ſons of Iſrael, every mean and grovelling ſentiment which a ſervile ſtate has a tendency to inſpire; all the abſurdity of weak and capricious minds; all the cowardice, perfidy, and ingratitude of corrupted hearts. With ſuch a race Moſes found himſelf under the neceſſity of living in a waſte and parched deſert, and of ſtruggling there with all the horrors of hunger and thirſt, and a total want of every neceſſary. Expoſed to all the inſults of an enraged, ungovernable multitude, he is at the ſame time conſtrained to act as

* Exod. xiv. 29.

as their intercessor with an offended God. He feels himself called upon to maintain the interests of the divine glory with a stiff-necked and perverse nation; and to plead the cause of that very nation with Deity, provoked to execute righteous judgment on a race of men who were continually disposed to insult his authority, and to degrade his perfections, by associating him with the infamous idols of the Pagan world.

"Moses had sometimes the felicity of averting the divine displeasure, and of restraining the madness of the people. But more frequently he endured the mortification of seeing the inefficacy of all his well-meant efforts. The violence of the people bore down all opposition; and offended Heaven turned a deaf ear to the voice of his supplication. Divine justice vindicated its rights; Israel felt its severest strokes, and *twenty-four thousand** fall at one stroke.

"The most awful chastisements have proved equally ineffectual with the tenderest expostulations, to bring them back to a sense of their duty. And as if Moses had been responsible for the calamities which they had brought upon themselves, by their reiterated crimes, they talk of stoning him. They propose to appoint a commander to conduct them back to Egypt, from whence God had delivered them by *a strong hand and a stretched-out arm:* they prefer an inglorious servitude to the miraculous protection afforded them in the wilderness, and to all the prospects of the fair inheritance which God had promised to bestow upon them.

"In a state of such anxiety and distress Moses passed forty complete years, and conducted, at length, the remains of this people to the borders of the promised land. Was ever life so singularly eventful? Was ever hero signalized by so many extraordinary exploits?

"If we go into a more particular detail of his great actions, we meet with a bright display of every shining virtue. "What

* Numb. xxv. 9.

"What magnanimity! Witness the armies he so successfully commanded; witness the crown and kingdom of Egypt despised, rejected, when put in competition with the obligations and prospects of religion.

"What firmness! Witness his undaunted addresses, and his animated replies to Pharaoh. *Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me.** *We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; there shall not be an hoof left behind. Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.* †

"What fervour! Witness these hands lifted up to heaven, while Israel was fighting against Amalek. Witness these ardent prayers in behalf of the rebellious Israelites: *Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of, will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.*‡

"What charity! Witness these forcible expressions: *Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*§

"What gentleness! Witness what is said of him, Numbers xii. 3. *Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*

"What earnest desire to draw supplies of grace and truth immediately from their source! Witness these ardent

* Exod. viii. 1. † Exod. x. 9. 26. 29.

‡ Exod. xxxii. 11—13. § Exod. xxxii. 31, 32.

ardent aspirations of soul after God: *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.**

"What zeal for the glory of God! Witness the tables of the law broken in pieces at the sight of a people who had rendered themselves unworthy of receiving marks so tender of the love of God. Witness that rigorous order issued to the sons of Levi: *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.*† Witness his answer to Joshua, when he expressed an apprehension lest the prophetic gifts bestowed on Eldad and Medad should eclipse the glory of his master: *Envi-est thou for my sake, would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!*‡

"What perseverance! Witness those exhortations; and that sacred song, with which he concluded his ministrations and his life.

"But where was perfect virtue ever to be found? Moses too had his infirmities. In a life so long, however, and so peculiarly circumstanced, who is chargeable with faults so slight and so few? His very errors seem to partake of the nature of virtue. The darker shades of his character become perceptible from the contrast they form with a whole life so bright and luminous. That he should shrink back, at first, from the proposal of an embassy to the king of Egypt; that he should neglect, for a season, from certain domestic considerations, the circumcision of a child; that he should be slow of belief respecting the disposition of a righteous God to extract water miraculously from the rock, to supply the wants of a murmuring generation; that he should strike the rock a second time, rather from indignation against the rebels,

* Exod. xxxiii. 15. 18. † Exod. xxxii. 27.

‡ Numb. xi. 29.

els, than from distrust of the God in whom compassions flow—These undoubtedly are blemishes, nay, offences which God might punish with death, were he strict to mark iniquity; but, when human infirmity is taken into the account, they are faults that excite pity rather than indignation.

"Should any part of the elogium we have pronounced on Moses seem exaggerated, we shall add, to all the honourable traits under which we have represented him, one infinitely more glorious still, traced by the hand of God himself, who best knows how to appreciate merit and distribute praise, and which exalts our prophet far above all human panegyric: *There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face: in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.*"

This truly great man died in the year of the world two thousand five hundred and fifty-three; and before the birth of Jesus Christ one thousand four hundred and fifty-one; eight hundred and ninety-seven years after the flood; and before the building of Solomon's temple four hundred and forty; in the fortieth year from the Exodus, or departure of Israel from Egypt; and of his own age the one hundred and twentieth. Before his death, he uttered a clear and distinct prediction of the Messiah, which, in "the fulness of time," was exactly accomplished; and he appeared in person on Mount Tabor to lay all his glory and honour at the feet of the Saviour of the world. We shall have finished our plan, after we have suggested a few reflections on this prediction of Moses, and on this his appearance, in company with Elias, to do homage to the Son of God,—"the Author and Finisher of our faith." To Him "be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

History

Hiſtory of Moſes.

LECTURE XIII.

DEUT. xviii. 15—18. ACTS iii. 22.

The Lord thy God will raiſe up unto thee a prophet from the midſt of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye ſhall hearken. According to all that thou deſiredſt of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the aſſembly, ſaying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me ſee this great fire any more that I die not. And the Lord ſaid unto me, They have well ſpoken that which they have ſpoken. I will raiſe them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he ſhall ſpeak unto them all that I ſhall command him. For Moſes truly ſaid unto the fathers, A prophet ſhall the Lord your God raiſe up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him ſhall ye hear in all things whatſoever he ſhall ſay unto you.

IN the frame and courſe of nature, who does not perceive evident marks of wiſdom in deſign, order in execution, energy in operation? All is plan, ſyſtem, harmony. Every thing beſpeaks a Being provident, omnipotent, unremittingly attentive: whoſe works, indeed, infinitely exceed our comprehenſion; but which by their beauty, ſimplicity and uſefulneſs, fill the mind with wonder and delight, while their variety, luſtre,

luſtre, magnificence and immenſity aſtoniſh and overwhelm. The government of the world, it is equally evident, is the reſult of contrivance; it evinces a conſtant, ſuperintending care. Event ariſes out of event, link runs into link. What to the firſt glance appeared an aſſemblage of ſcattered fragments, is found, on a more careful and attentive inſpection, to be a regular, beautiful, well-proportioned fabric, a "body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part."

It muſt be pleaſing to every ſerious mind to obſerve in the work of redemption a ſimilar uniformity of deſign, progreſs and execution. We find patriarchs, prophets, apoſtles, remote from, unknown to one another, at different ages, in different regions, declaring the ſame purpoſe, promoting the ſame plan, aiming at the ſame end. This affords a preſumption, at leaſt, that he who made, upholds and governs the univerſe, is likewiſe the Author of ſalvation; in all whoſe works and ways a noble and important end is obviouſly kept in view; and that end purſued and attained by means the wiſeſt and the beſt. The Moſaic and Chriſtian are not ſeparate, unconnected, independent diſpenſations, but correſponding and harmonious members of the ſame great building of God. Nature and grace have one ſource, one date; they proceed in a parallel direction, they are haſtening to one common conſummation. Or, to ſpeak more properly, the ſyſtem of external nature and the ſcheme of redemption are the well-adjuſted, the harmonized parts of the one great plan of eternal Providence, which contains the whole purpoſe of the glorious CREATOR concerning man—his firſt formation, his preſent ſtate and character, and his final deſtination.

Turn up the inſpired volume at whatever page you will, and you have a perſon, or an event, or a ſervice, or a prediction unfolding, in one form or another, the merciful "purpoſe of Him who worketh all things after

after the counſel of his own will, that we ſhould be to the praiſe of his glory." Tranſport yourſelf in thought to whatever period of the world you will, and you ſtill find the goſpel preached; whether in the ſacrifice of righteous Abel, the tranſlation of Enoch, the ark of Noah, the promiſe made to Abraham, the predictions of dying Jacob; from the ſeat of Moſes, the throne of David, the dungeon of Jeremiah. They all ſpeak an uniform language, all give witneſs to the ſame perſon, all diſcloſe their own peculiar portion of the goſpel treaſure, for the illumination of an ignorant, the reformation of a corrupted, the ſalvation of a periſhing world.

The writings of Moſes exhibit a ſingular diſplay of this grand combined plan. He traces nature up to her birth, and inſtructs us "how the heavens and earth roſe out of chaos." He conducts us through the mazes of the moral government of the Great Supreme, and there too unfolds wild uproar reduced to order, and "the wrath of man working the righteouſneſs of God." He draws aſide the curtains of the night, and "the day-ſpring from on high" dawns on fallen humanity. He attends us through the morning of that bright day, and, conſtrained at length to retire, leaves behind him the aſſurance, that "the fulneſs of the time" would come, that "the morning light" would advance with growing ſplendour unto "the perfect day." He preſents to our aſtoniſhed eyes the vaſt, the complicated, the beautiful machine; wheel within wheel put in motion, preſerving from age to age its ſteady majeſtic tenor, with native, unwearied, undiminiſhed force; referring us ſtill to its divine AUTHOR, who made and upholds all "by the word of his power," and for whoſe "pleaſure they are and were created."

Moſes, not only in what he wrote, but in what he was and acted, illuſtriouſly diſplayed the grace of God in the redemption of the world. Not only did he *write* and *teſtify* concerning the great Deliverer, but his

his perſon, his character, his offices, were a prefiguration of "Him who was to come," and to whom "all the prophets give witneſs."

The prediction which has been read, and the pointed application made of it by the apoſtles to their divine Maſter, conſtitute the proof of what we have juſt advanced. Moſes, under the direction of the ſpirit of prophecy, raiſes the expectation of mankind to the appearance of a prophet, like, indeed, but far ſuperior to himſelf; and the apoſtles point with the finger to Jeſus of Nazareth, ſaying, "We have found him of whom Moſes, in the law, and the prophets did write."

A limited creature, of threeſcore years and ten, is loſt in the contemplation of a period of fifteen hundred and eleven years, for ſuch was the diſtance of this prophecy from its accompliſhment. The ſhort-lived creature loſes ſight of it, feels his intereſt in it but ſmall, is at little pains to tranſmit the knowledge of it to thoſe who ſhall come after him; the next generation it is neglected, overlooked, forgotten; or, if obſerved and recollected, is miſunderſtood, miſapplied. But during every inſtant of the extended period, the eternal eye has been watching over it; in ſolemn ſilence attending its progreſs, triumphing over both neglect and oppoſition; and a ſlumbering world is rouſed at length to ſee and to acknowledge the truth and faithfulneſs, the power, wiſdom and grace of the Moſt High.

The day of Moſes, then, in the eye of God, runs down to that of Chriſt; as his, in return, aſcends to the earlieſt of the promiſes and predictions, illuminating, quickening, confirming, fulfilling all that is written. Placed at whatever point of the ſyſtem of nature, whether on our own planet or on any other, to the north, or to the ſouth, in ſummer or winter, the eye is ſtill attracted to the common centre of all, the great "Light of the world." In like manner, at whatever diſtance we are placed, and in whatever direction we contemplate

contemplate the system which redeeming love has framed, from under the shade of the tree of life in Eden, from the summit of Ararat, Moriah, or Pisgah, in the plain of Mamre, or from a pinnacle of the temple; with Abraham, viewing the Saviour and his day afar off, or with Simeon embracing him, the same "Sun of righteousness" sheds his glory around us; we see the light, we feel the influence of him who quickeneth and enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

As we find Moses plainly and unequivocally referring men to Christ, so the Saviour as explicitly refers to Moses for a testimony concerning himself; thereby plainly insinuating, that if the Jewish prophet deserved any credit, possessed any respectability, this credit, this respectability were ministring servants to the dignity of his own person, the sacredness of his character, the divinity of his mission. And this is accompanied with a severe denunciation of judgment against such as admitted the authority of Moses, but rejected that of Christ; to introduce, recommend and confirm which was the end for which Moses was raised up. "Do not think I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

This reciprocal testimony, therefore, of the founders of the ancient and new economy, throws light on both, and communicates mutual credibility and importance. Moses satisfies himself with simply delivering the prediction which he had in charge; he forms no plan, enters into no arrangement to bring it into effect, but leaves to Providence the care of leading forward to the accomplishment, in the proper time and method. Christ simply points to what was written, and was generally known, received and respected as a revelation from heaven, and requires to be believed and obeyed no farther than he bore the characters

ters under which Moſes had announced him; particularly that of "the great Prophet which ſhould come into the world."

—The proper character of a prophet is to communicate the ſpecial will of Heaven to men. God, indeed, writes his will on the mind of every man, as he comes into the world; interweaves it with the very conſtitution and frame of his being, ſo that, in truth, every man is a law, is a prophet to himſelf. But the characters are quickly eraſed, effaced; education, example, ſuperſtition, vicious propenſities, obliterate the writing of God; habit and the commerce of the world harden the heart, and lull the conſcience aſleep, and "the hearts of men are ſet in them to do evil." Hence the neceſſity of a prophet, of a meſſenger, of a miniſter from heaven, to republiſh the original law, to reſtore the obliterated characters, to call men back to God, from whom they have revolted.

And ſuch an one was Moſes; raiſed up of God at a period of ſingular darkneſs and depravity, divinely commiſſioned to promulgate the royal law. Not to ſettle a different, a novel conſtitution, not to new-model human nature, but to revive and enforce the primitive conſtitution, to proclaim in the ear what nature whiſpered from the beginning, to hang up the conſpicuous tablet before the eye, whoſe contents are the exact counterpart of what the finger of God, in the very formation of man, engraved on "the living tables of the heart." And when Chriſt came, the Prophet after his ſimilitude, was it not in like manner to rebuild what was broken down, not to rear a totally different edifice? to magnify the law and make it honourable, to clear it from miſinterpretation and perverſion, to reſtore it to its native purity and ſimplicity, and to extract the ſpirit out of the letter? "Think not," ſays he, "that I am come to deſtroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil. For verily I ſay unto you, Till heaven and earth paſs, one jot or one tittle ſhall in no wiſe

paſs

paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled."* This confirms the obſervation we have been all along endeavouring to inculcate reſpecting the uniformity and perſeverance of the divine procedure. Men ſtart from purpoſe to purpoſe, from purſuit to purſuit; they loſe ſight, they tire of their object; they waſte their ſtrength, they are diſcouraged by oppoſition, they began to build before they counted the coſt. But "known to God are all his works from the beginning." He forms his plan, and undeviatingly purſues it. "I am the Lord, I change not." He lays his foundation, and it ſtandeth ſure, and the building riſes; "he willeth and none can let it." "God made man upright;" and to maintain or reſtore that uprightneſs is his great aim and end, under every diſpenſation of his providence, under the law and the goſpel, by Moſes and by Chriſt.

—A prophet muſt have the neceſſary qualifications for his office, muſt be inſtructed in the mind of God, be filled with zeal for his glory, be animated with ardent love to mankind, be fortified againſt the aſſaults and oppoſition of ignorance, and prejudice, and envy. And ſuch an one was Moſes, "whom the Lord knew face to face," with whom he converſed as a man with his friend; his zeal was inextinguiſhable; for the good of Iſrael he was ready to make the ſacrifice of ſelf; his meekneſs was unruffled, his patience not to be ſubdued, his perſeverance indefatigable, his reſolution undaunted. How much more eminently conſpicuous were theſe characters of a prophet, in the great "Author and Finiſher of the chriſtian faith?" The only begotten Son who is "in the boſom of the Father, he hath declared him;" "the zeal of thine houſe hath eaten me up." "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that ſent me." "The cup which my Father giveth me, ſhall I not drink it?" "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed."†

* Matt. v. 17, 18. † Matt. iii. 17.

Moſes converſed forty days with God, in the mount; but thus ſaith uncreated Wiſdom, "The Lord poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning or ever the earth was;" "before Abraham was, I am." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The ſame was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men."*

The ſpirit of Moſes was ſometimes ſtirred within him; he daſhed the tables of the law to the ground, "he ſpake unadviſedly with his lips;" he incurred the diſpleaſure of his heavenly Father, he drew down a ſentence of juſt condemnation upon his head; but the ſpirit of the chriſtian Leader was in no one inſtance diſcompoſed. "He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his lips." He ſuffered indeed and died, but it was without a crime, "the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us unto God." Moſes expreſſed a willingneſs to be blotted out of God's book, to be deprived of his perſonal right as a ſon of Iſrael, provided Iſrael might receive the remiſſion of ſin, have their rights preſerved, and the covenant of promiſe be confirmed. But Chriſt became "a curſe for us," was "hanged on a tree," was "cut off from the land of the living," became "a propitiation for ſin," "bare our ſins in his own body on the tree," "became ſin for us, though he knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him."

—A prophet muſt exhibit the ſigns of his miſſion. Men will not believe him on his own report, will ſuſpect him of attention to his own fame, or intereſt, or authority. To prove therefore that he came from God, that he ſpeaks in his name, that he is veſted with his authority, he muſt do the works of God. And thus was Moſes commiſſioned and permitted to prove his

* John i. 1 4.

his mission. By sign upon sign he demonstrated that the Lord had appeared unto him, and spake by him; earth and water and air bore their united testimony to his divine legation; and the most enlightened nation of the globe was made to feel his ascendant by arguments addressed at once to the senses and the understanding. Is it needful to say that the great Prophet, "Apostle and High-Priest of our profession," by similar means, by more irresistible evidence, evinced that he was "a teacher sent from God?" I shall say nothing respecting the greater number, variety and notoriety of Christ's miracles; though every one of these circumstances furnishes ample matter of discussion; I satisfy myself at present with mentioning two particulars which strikingly establish Christ's prophetic character, and give it a clear and decided superiority to that of Moses. The latter acted by a delegated authority, according to a prescribed form; he assumed nothing to himself, but was checked, reproved, condemned, the moment he presumed to arrogate independence, to speak or act for himself. But Jesus Christ wrought miracles in his own name, by his own power, as the Lord of nature, as possessed of independent sovereignty. Again, the signs which Moses exhibited were of a mixed nature, they declared both the mercy and judgment of God, they poured down hail, and tempest, and pestilence on Egypt, as well as dropped manna on the tents of Israel; whereas the signs which Jesus adduced in support of his mission were all miracles of mercy; the powers of hell alone felt the rod of his anger; and the miracles by which he confirmed his doctrine breathed its meekness and gentleness and charity.

"Of the things which have been spoken this is the sum: we have such an High-Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man."*

* Heb. viii. 1, 2.

"Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, conſider the Apoſtle and High-Prieſt of our profeſſion, Chriſt Jeſus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as alſo Moſes was faithful in all his houſe. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moſes, inaſmuch as he who hath builded the houſe hath more honour than the houſe. For every houſe is builded by ſome man; but he that built all things is God. And Moſes verily was faithful in all his houſe as a ſervant, for a teſtimony of thoſe things which were to be ſpoken after; but Chriſt as a ſon over his own houſe: whoſe houſe are we, if we hold faſt the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."* "We ought to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip. For if the word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompenſe of reward; how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will?"† "He that deſpiſed Moſes's law, died without mercy, under two or three witneſſes: of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit of grace?"‡

Having now, in the courſe of theſe exerciſes, through a ſeries of years, endeavoured to trace the hiſtory of mankind, in a ſeries of characters, from Adam to Moſes, copied from the original portraits which the pencil of inſpiration has itſelf vouchſafed to delineate; the whole in general, and every one in particular,

* Heb. iii. 1—6. † Heb. ii. 1—4.

‡ Heb. x. 28, 29.

particular, referring themſelves to one great ORIGINAL, from whom their meaning, uſe and importance are derived,—I haſten to conclude my plan, by turning over to the goſpel hiſtory, which exhibits that ſame Moſes, whom we ſaw expire on Mount Nebo, and "buried in a valley in the land of Moab, over againſt Beth-peor;" whoſe dying benediction yet trembles on our ear, and whoſe funeral elogy we attempted to ſing, alive again on Mount Tabor, and giving perſonal teſtimony and homage to him whom he prefigured and foretold. The hiſtory of Moſes is not properly ended till then: and in vaniſhing from our ſight on the mount of transfiguration, he becomes a glorious harbinger of the "life and immortality which are brought to light by the goſpel."

Hiſtory of Moſes.

LECTURE XIV.

LUKE ix. 28—35.

And it came to paſs about an eight days after theſe ſayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the faſhion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and gliſtering. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moſes and Elias, who appeared in glory, and ſpake of his deceaſe, which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem. But Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with ſleep: and when they were awake, they ſaw his glory, and the two men that ſtood with him. And it came to paſs, as they departed from him, Peter ſaid unto Jeſus, Maſter, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moſes, and one for Elias: not knowing what he ſaid. While he thus ſpake, there came a cloud, and overſhadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, ſaying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.

IN the narrowneſs of their conceptions and the preſumptuouſneſs of their pride, men are apt to conſider themſelves as the only, or, at leaſt, the chief inhabitants of the creation of God. A falſe patriotiſm, or rather a ſpirit of inſolence and ſelfiſhneſs has gone farther, has aſcribed the conſequence of a whole univerſe

verſe to ſome inſignificant little region or diſtrict of this little globe, and has repreſented the men who breathe on ſuch a ſpot, and converſe in ſuch a language, as the only perſons who are worthy of conſideration. We reflect not, what a ſpeck our own country is, compared with the whole earth; what a point the earth is, compared to the vaſt ſolar ſyſtem; and how the ſolar ſyſtem itſelf is loſt, in the contemplation of infinite ſpace. We reflect not on the myriads of "juſt men made perfect," from the death of "righteous Abel," down to the expiring ſaint, whoſe diſengaged ſpirit is juſt now on the wing to the boſom of his God; of thoſe who, loſt to us, yet live to their Creator. We reflect not on the myriads of, probably, more glorious beings, who people the greater and more glorious worlds which ſurround ours. We reflect not on the myriads of pure ſpirits who never left their firſt eſtate, that innumerable company of angels who "excel in ſtrength," "the leaſt of whom could wield theſe elements."

Sound reaſon and "the wiſdom which is from above" correct our narrowneſs of thought and pride of heart; and teach us to ſay, in the words which our immortal bard puts in the mouth of Adam firſt of men, addreſſed to his fair conſort—

——"Nor think, tho' men were none,
That heaven would want ſpectators, God want praiſe.
Millions of ſpiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unſeen, both when we wake and when we ſleep;
All theſe with ceaſeleſs praiſe his works behold,
Both day and night."

If our ears were not dull and limited as our ſpirits—

——"How often, from the ſteep
Of echoing hill or thicket ſhould we hear,
Celeſtial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or reſponſive each to other's note,
Singing their great Creator? Oft in bands,

While

While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
With heavenly touch of inſtrumental ſounds,
In full harmonic number join'd, their ſongs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to heaven."

We fooliſhly imagine the world of ſpirits to be at a vaſt diſtance, whereas in truth we are upon its very confines. We conſider its inhabitants as entire ſtrangers to us, whereas they are conſtantly about our path and our bed, attending our going out and coming in, our lying down and riſing up. If our eyes were not held, we ſhould even now behold them joining in and aſſiſting our praiſes, rejoicing together, when, by the miniſtry of the word of divine grace, ſinners are converted, and ſaints edified. Little did the three diſciples think, when they aſcended Mount Tabor, that they were ſo near to an interview with Moſes and Elias. Moſes, and Elias, and Chriſt, are not far from us; it is our folly and infirmity to think ourſelves far from them.

When we look back to the latter end of Moſes, the man of God, we attend him up to Mount Nebo, and behold him taking from Piſgah a laſt look and a laſt farewel of the glory of this world. We ſee his eyes cloſing in peace, and breathe a ſigh over his tomb, and bid him a long farewel, and think we have loſt him forever. But it is not an everlaſting adieu. On Tabor we have found him again, after a lapſe of fifteen centuries; we find not only his name, his memory, his writings, his predictions, his ſpirit, alive and in force, but his very perſon, ſtill employed in miniſtring to the ſalvation of the Iſrael of God: and hence we look forwards to the lapſe of a few years more, at the expiration of which we hope to meet him indeed, not armed with that fiery law which condemns and conſumes, but a miniſter and a fellow-partaker of that grace which redeems and ſaves.

We cannot conſider ourſelves therefore as having yet concluded the hiſtory of Moſes, while that memorable

rable event of it, which is the ſubject of this evening's reading, remains unconſidered; and as the evangelic page has exhibited him to us alive from the dead, let us devoutly attend to the reaſon and end of this glorious apparition. It naturally ſuggeſts to us the following reflections:

1. That Jehovah is, with undeviating, undiverted, undivided attention, carrying on the great plan of his providence to full maturity, by every order of beings, in every poſſible ſtate; by thoſe who cheerfully enter into his views, and joyfully ſubmit to his will; and by thoſe who careleſsly neglect or proudly oppoſe it. We have ſeen him ſerving himſelf of this Moſes in the court of Pharaoh, in the paſtures of Midian, in the wilderneſs of Sinai; as a prophet, as a legiſlator, as an hiſtorian. And, to fit him for a new field of action, behold him ſhining in a new and glorious form. The grave ſeems to have ſurrendered up its truſt, heaven has yielded up one of its inhabitants, and Moſes is now admitted into a land from which he was once ſhut out. In this world we have ſtill to deplore faculties waſting, impairing, extinguiſhed; uſefulneſs interrupted, cut off in the midſt, by the ſtroke of death, the earth impoveriſhed by the premature departure of wiſdom and worth. The hiſtory of mankind exhibits projects blaſted, ſchemes abortive, inſtruments feeble and inadequate, concuſſions violent, revolutions ſudden and unexpected; but far different the view which the ſcriptures repreſent of the kingdom of God. In it, one generation paſſeth not away that another may ſucceed, but there is an eternal accumulation of citizens, eternally increaſing in wiſdom, goodneſs and felicity; faculties ever improving, projects advancing in full certainty of ſucceſs, means fitted to their end, and the one great ſcheme of the Eternal Mind proceeding in ſteady, uniform majeſty, to its final conſummation. Pleaſing, awful thought! "The counſel of the Lord ſtandeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."*

II. We

* Pſal. xxxiii. 11.

II. We obſerve, from this hiſtory, The benevolent intereſt which celeſtial beings take in the affairs of men. They are no unconcerned ſpectators of what paſſes here below. They who have been raiſed from earth to heaven, have not loſt all recollection of the world they have left, nor dropt all concern about their brethren in the fleſh. Moſes and Elias with joy reviſit an inferior region, if thereby they can be inſtrumental in promoting the work of redemption; and exchange, for a ſeaſon, the ſociety of angels, and the delights of the paradiſe of God, for the company of ſimple fiſhermen, and a barren mountain's top, that we might have ſtrong conſolation in contemplating "the ſufferings of Chriſt," and the glory that preceded and followed. O what an exalted, what a generous ſpirit does true religion breathe and inſpire! It makes angels "miniſtring ſpirits to them who are the heirs of ſalvation;" it brings departed ſaints back to earth again; it converts Tabor into Heaven, and determines the choice of an apoſtle, when in a ſtrait betwixt two, and to prefer abiding in the fleſh, becauſe more needful to his fellow-creatures, to the ſelfiſh joy, though far better, of departing and being with Chriſt. But Moſes and Elias and Paul were themſelves men, bone of our bone, and fleſh of our fleſh, were inſtructed by ſympathy to commiſerate, and prompted by affection to relieve, human wretchedneſs. Behold an infinitely greater miracle of generous, diſintereſted love; "God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." * Jeſus "loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." † "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the ſeed of Abraham." ‡ "As children are partakers

* John iii. 16. † Rev. i. 5, 6.

‡ Heb. ii. 16.

takers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage."*

III. The history before us suggests, The sweet harmony, the perfect intelligence which subsist between glorified spirits. Moses and Elias, as they co-operated in the same design, though at different periods upon earth, much more concur in sentiment, in exertion, now they see more clearly and comprehend more fully the intentions of a wise and gracious Providence. Through ignorance, through pride, through jealousy, through malice, imperfect men on earth will differ, will hate and oppose each other; but in celestial bosoms the dark, malignant, unsocial passions find no place: in them there ever prevails unity of intelligence, unity of design, unity in operation, unity of affection. Prompted by the same motive, aiming at the same end, Gabriel, a multitude of the heavenly host, Moses and Elias—angels single, and in bands, announce to the world the advent of the Saviour, celebrate his birth, witness his transfiguration, relieve his agony, record his death, declare his resurrection from the dead, grace his ascent to heaven, proclaim his second coming. And O what must be that harmony and joy! the harmony and joy of heaven, where angels and archangels, the cherubim and the seraphim, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the whole multitude of the redeemed, animated by one spirit, adore the same object, rejoice in the same grace wherein they stand, and join in the same triumphant song!

Connect with this, the idea of the quick and perfect intelligence which subsists between the children of this kingdom. The happiness of heaven is a social, not a solitary joy. But how can the poverty of our imagination, the coldness of our affections, conceive the intimacy of intercourse, the promptness of communication,

* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

munication, the ſympathy of feeling, in pure ſpirits wholly diſpoſed to love, and free from all deſire or deſign to diſguiſe, to deceive, to conceal!

" Where friendſhip full exerts her ſofteſt pow'r,
Perfect eſteem enliven'd by deſire
Ineffable, and ſympathy of ſoul,
Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,
With boundleſs confidence."—

THOMSON.

With what promptitude and intelligence celeſtial beings converſe, ſay, ye gentle ſpirits, who know what it is to ſoothe and relieve the lazy lingering hours of abſence by the friendly aid of letters; ye, whom the murmur of a ſigh, or the tone of a ſingle word can inſtantly inſtruct; ye, whoſe hearts the preſſure of a finger can awake to rapture; ye, whoſe kindred, congenial ſouls the ſlighteſt glance of the impaſſioned eye, can, in a moment, quick as the lightning's flaſh, penetrate, kindle, inform, aſſimilate;—

"——Ye whom the ſudden tear
Surpriſes often when you look around,
And nothing ſtrikes your eye but ſights of bliſs."

THOMSON.

But the pureſt human affection is ever daſhed with doubt, with apprehenſion, with ſuſpicion; its communications are liable to be retarded by dulneſs, prevented by accident, or checked and blaſted by a malignant eye, and therefore can at beſt convey but an imperfect idea of that "perfect love which caſteth out fear," of that divine ſympathy which ſpeeds the holy intercourſe from ſoul to ſoul, of that mutual underſtanding which needs not the medium of ſenſe to convey it.—

Though we cannot conceive, much leſs deſcribe, in what manner angels and ſaints in bliſs converſe one

one with another, yet from the text we know, what is the *one*, *great*, *darling* theme of their converſation. Moſes and Elias deſcend from their heavenly thrones, from before the fountain of light and life, appear in glory, reviſit the earth, aſſociate with men, to do homage at the feet of Jeſus, and to "ſpeak of his deceaſe which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem." This leads to a

IVth, and the moſt important remark on this paſſage of our Saviour's hiſtory, in connexion with that of Moſes, namely, That under every diſpenſation, before the giving of the law, and under its reign, when it was reſtored, and after it is aboliſhed; to righteous men on earth, to juſt men made perfect, to the angels of God; in the eye of God himſelf,—there is one object of peculiar magnitude and importance, which is before all, above all, runs through all, and in which all ſhall finally terminate. It is ſurely not without a meaning, that the promiſes, the predictions, from firſt to laſt, point out a Saviour that ſhould ſuffer and die; that all the types, ſervices, ſacrifices of the law ſhould repreſent a ſalvation that was to be wrought out, to be purchaſed with blood; that the whole doctrine of the goſpel ſhould be compreſſed into one point, the doctrine of the *Croſs;* that the throne of God eternal in the heavens ſhould exhibit at its right hand, and in the midſt of it, "a Lamb as it had been ſlain;" that the ſong of the redeemed ſhould celebrate Him who loved the ſons of men, and "waſhed them from their ſins in his blood!" O the infatuation of a careleſs, unbelieving world! That ſubject which the ranſomed of the Lord dwell upon with ever new and increaſing delight; that great "myſtery of godlineſs," which "angels deſire to look into;" that object which the great God has marked with ſpecial preciſion as his own; the wonder of heaven, the joy of the earth, the theme of eternity, was "to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs;" is to a faithleſs and perverſe generation a thing of nought, the ſong of the

the drunkard, the jeſt of fools! If that blood has fallen and lies with ſuch oppreſſive weight, both as a temporal and a ſpiritual curſe on thoſe who raſhly imprecated it on themſelves and their children, and then impiouſly and remorſeleſsly ſhed it; "of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit of grace?"* May that blood be upon us, and upon our children, to cleanſe, not to condemn, to exalt, not to overwhelm us, and be it our determinate reſolution, through the grace that is in Chriſt, to know nothing in compariſon of Chriſt Jeſus, and him crucified, "and to glory in nothing but his croſs."

V. Obſerve, The ſuperiority aſcribed, by a voice from the moſt excellent glory, to Chriſt the Lord, ſwallowing up and eclipſing all created excellency and perfection. "This is my beloved Son, hear him,"† proclaims the voice, and inſtantly Moſes and Elias diſappear, that Jeſus may be all in all. They have brought their glory and honour and laid it at his feet; they have pointed out to mankind in whoſe light they ſhine, in what conſiſts their chief eminence and diſtinction. They in effect ſay the ſame thing with John Baptiſt; "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, whoſe ſhoes latchet I am not worthy to unlooſe."‡ "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world."§ They forbid us to look toward them, or to truſt in them for ſalvation. Having given this teſtimony to their Lord and ours, they retire to that world of bliſs into which they found admiſſion through that blood which cleanſeth from all ſin, through that deceaſe which Chriſt was ready "to accompliſh at Jeruſalem." Let us joyfully bend the knee to Him, who, "for the ſuffering of death, is crowned

* Heb. x. 29. † Luke ix. 35. ‡ John i. 27.
§ John i. 29.

crowned with glory and honour, and has obtained a name that is above every name;" whom Moses and Elias acknowledge as their greater; whom all the angels of God are commanded to worship, as "the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature," "by whom were created all things that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him."*

Finally, The passage exhibits to our wondering eyes a glimpse of that glory which all the faithful shall finally attain; in the person of one who had never tasted death; whose body, by a miracle of almighty power, was fitted for heaven and immortality without seeing corruption in the grave; and of one, who, as we must, died and was buried, and by a similar miracle, was either ransomed from the power of the grave, or whose glorified spirit was fitted with a temporary vehicle of transparent flesh for the present grand occasion; but above all, in the person of the greatest of the three, who was pleased to clothe humanity, which had not yet, but soon was to suffer death, with a transitory glory, the forerunner of that which should quickly follow, and do away all the ignominy of the tomb, and become the sure pledge of that glory with which he shall invest all them that believe, after "the fashion of his own glorious body." While we contemplate Mount Tabor, the immortal spirit looks through the frail tottering fabric of flesh and blood, in which it is inclosed; and while, from its present connexion, it surveys with concern the inroads of disease, the wastes of time, the approaches of dissolution; from the visions of God, from the power of free sovereign grace, from the present attainments of the faithful, beholds with rapture the splendour of that vehicle in which it shall ascend "to meet the Lord in the air," when "mortality shall be swallowed up of life;" when it shall

* Col. i. 16.

ſhall be united to a body inſuſceptible of pain, undepreſſed by its own gravity, unfettered by the laws of dull matter, uncondemned to mortality. Glorious and bleſſed day, when the meaneſt of the ſaints ſhall reſemble Moſes, not in that green and lively old age which experienced not dimneſs of eyes, nor abatement of natural vigour, but in that renovated youth, that unfading beauty, that impaſſive ſtrength, that immortal luſtre, wherein on the mount of the Lord he was ſeen; and ſhall reſemble Elias, not by mounting with the help of a chariot of fire and horſes of fire into heaven, but with native force, immediately derived from the great Source of life and motion, ſhall ſpontaneouſly aſcend up to his native ſeat; ſhall reſemble Chriſt. his divine head, not in that ſinleſs infirmity to which he voluntarily ſubmitted in the days of his fleſh, but in that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and which for a moment burſt forth on the mount of transfiguration, when "his face did ſhine as the ſun, and his raiment was white as the light." Glorious and bleſſed goſpel! which firſt taught the reſurrection from the dead, which has "aboliſhed death, and brought life and immortality to light;" whoſe "exceeding great and precious promiſes" make men "partakers of a divine nature;" whoſe hallowed page repreſents ſaints and angels quitting their heavenly abode to miniſter to the neceſſities of wretched mortals; and wretched mortals riſing to the everlaſting poſſeſſion of heavenly thrones. "O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."*

But now the curtain is dropt, Moſes and Elias have reſumed their places in heaven, and the glory of Tabor is no more. Yet, though unſeen, they ceaſe not to inſtruct us. Though withdrawn, they are in the midſt of us ſtill; the diſtinction of paſt and future they feel no longer, and ſeparation by ſpace cannot

* 1 Cor. xv. 57.

not keep celeſtial beings aſunder. Providence brought together into one place the giver and reſtorer of the law; and the firſt harbingers of the goſpel blending earth and heaven together in homage to the Son of God. And all diſtance between them too is now forever done away. Remote as we are, we behold them together in a ſtate of glorious perfection, but permitted to converſe with us no more. But He is with us ſtill, their Lord and ours; his voice we can ſtill hear, after they are ſilenced, and Him we are commanded to hear. "Jeſus Chriſt, the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and forever:" "To Him all the prophets give witneſs," and he is "the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth."

And thus have we finiſhed our propoſed delineation of the lives of the patriarchs, from Adam, the father of the human race, down to Moſes, the great legiſlator and prophet of the Hebrew nation; with the intermediate illuſtrious perſonages, whom the Spirit of God has preſerved from oblivion, for our information and uſe; whom Providence raiſed up in the earlier ages of the world, to occupy diſtinguiſhed ſtations, and to accompliſh important deſigns; who, by their reſpective characters, offices and declarations, predicted or prefigured the Meſſiah; who edified the world, while they lived, by their doctrine and example; and who, being dead, continue living monitors and inſtructors of mankind.

While we contemplate the progreſs of theſe venerable figures along the plain of exiſtence, we feel ourſelves in motion, we are hurrying down the ſtream, we begin to mingle with the aſſembly of the departed, we leave our place among men empty. Of thoſe who entered with us on this career of meditation, "ſome are not;" their courſe is finiſhed, they have fulfilled their day, they are gone to join the men who lived beyond the flood. The cold hand of death has frozen up ſome of the ſtreams of friendſhip; the congelation is gaining upon our own vital powers, and

marking us for the tomb, where the endearments of social affection, and the meltings of sympathy, and the glow of love, are felt no more. But "we sorrow not" over departed worth "as those who have no hope." God, and angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect," have gained what the world has lost: they move in a higher sphere; they perceive with purer intelligence, act with superior energy, enjoy with more exalted capacity; they die no more, they are as the angels of God in heaven: and Providence charges itself with the care of the forsaken, the helpless and the forlorn whom they have left behind. And we look forward together to that day, when we shall join Moses and Elias, Peter and James and John, and all who have died before us, or shall die after us in the Lord, not in the glory of Tabor, which was to pass away, but of Mount Zion which is above, and which endureth to endless ages—when we shall come together "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel,"* and dwell in a tabernacle not erected by the hands of man, the habitation of an hour, but in "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Be ye therefore "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Purchase for yourselves a deathless name among the "ransomed of the Lord." Consider yourselves as encompassed, observed, tenderly regarded by those to whom you were dear while they tabernacled among men, and who now love you with the ardour of immortals. Add to the consolation which they enjoy, that of marking your progress in wisdom, your growth in grace,

* Heb. xii. 22—24.

grace. Cultivate acquaintance with the language you are to speak, the spirit you are to breathe, the manners with which you are to conform, the persons with whom you are to converse, eternally. "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."†

* Heb. xii. 1, 2. † 1 John iii. 2, 3.

END OF VOLUME V.